斑斓阅读·外研社英汉双语百科书系

众说苏格拉底

Socrates

A Very Short Introduction

C. C. W. Taylor 著
欧阳谦 译

外语教学与研究出版社
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

C. C. W. Taylor

Socrates

A Very Short Introduction

众说苏格拉底

苏格拉底是西方历史上最著名、最神秘的哲学家。两千多年过去了，围绕其生平学说仍有许多疑团悬而未解。谁要置苏格拉底于死地？谁对苏格拉底的记述最真？谁受苏格拉底的影响最深？本书在博采百家之长的基础上，再现了苏格拉底的生平行迹，考察了历史上的苏格拉底和各家笔下的苏格拉底之间的复杂关系，剖析了苏格拉底对后世哲学的深远影响。

斑斓阅读　全新的阅读体验



一个学术性教育性
出版机构



网址：http://www.fltrp.com

定价：18.00 元

斑斓阅读·外研社英汉双语百科书系

众说苏格拉底

Socrates

A Very Short Introduction

C. C. W. Taylor 著
欧阳谦 译

外语教学与研究出版社
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS
北京 BEIJING

京权图字：01－2006－6840

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

众说苏格拉底 = VSI: Socrates / 泰勒(Taylor, C. C. W.)著；欧阳谦译 .— 北京：外语教学与研究出版社，2007.6
(斑斓阅读·外研社英汉双语百科书系)
ISBN 978－7－5600－6802－2

Ⅰ. 众… Ⅱ. ①泰… ②欧… Ⅲ. ①英语—汉语—对照读物 ②苏格拉底 (前469～前399)—思想评论 Ⅳ. H319.4: B

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2007) 第 099967 号

出 版 人：于春迟
项目负责：姚 虹 周渝毅
责任编辑：高耿松
美术编辑：牛茜茜
版式设计：袁 璐
出版发行：外语教学与研究出版社
社　　址：北京市西三环北路19号 (100089)
网　　址：http://www.fltrp.com
印　　刷：北京市鑫霸印务有限公司
开　　本：787×1092 1/32
印　　张：7.625
版　　次：2007年7月第1版 2007年7月第1次印刷
书　　号：ISBN 978－7－5600－6802－2
定　　价：18.00元

* * *

斑斓阅读·外研社英汉双语百科书系

第1辑

Ancient Warfare	古代战争与西方战争文化
Architecture	建筑与文化
Cosmology	认识宇宙学
Egyptian Myth	走近埃及神话
Emotion	解读情感
Global Catastrophes	全球灾变与世界末日
The History of Time	时间的历史
Plato	解读柏拉图
The Renaissance	文艺复兴简史
Socrates	**众说苏格拉底**

待出书目

American History

Ancient Egypt

The Anglo-Saxon Age

Animal Rights

Art History

Bestsellers

The Bible

Dead Sea Scrolls
Dinosaurs
Dreaming
Eighteenth-Century Britain
The European Union
Existentialism
Feminism
Freud
Human Evolution
Jung
Medieval Britain
Modern Art
Myth
New Testament
Nineteenth-Century Britain
Old Testament
Postmodernism
Prehistory
Psychiatry
Renaissance Art
The Roman Empire
Shakespeare
Twentieth-Century Britain
The Vikings
World Music
World Trade Organization

略语表

DL	Diogenes Laertius 第欧根尼 · 拉尔修
Pl.	Plato 柏拉图
Apol.	《申辩篇》(《苏格拉底的自辩》)
Charm.	《卡尔米德篇》
Euthyd.	《欧谛德谟篇》
Euthyph.	《游叙弗伦篇》
Gorg.	《高尔吉亚篇》
Hipp.Ma.	《大希比阿篇》
Lach.	《拉凯篇》
Ph.	《斐多篇》
Prot.	《普罗泰戈拉篇》
Rep.	《理想国》
Symp.	《会饮篇》
Tht.	《泰阿泰德篇》
Xen.	色诺芬
Apol.	《申辩篇》
Mem.	《回忆苏格拉底》
Oec.	《经济学篇》
Symp.	《会饮篇》

Abbreviations

DL	Diogenes Laertius
Pl.	Plato
Apol.	*Apology* (*Defence of Socrates*)
Charm.	*Charmides*
Euthyd.	*Euthydemus*
Euthyph.	*Euthyphro*
Gorg.	*Gorgias*
Hipp. Ma.	*Hippias Major*
Lach.	*Laches*
Ph.	*Phaedo*
Prot.	*Protagoras*
Rep.	*Republic*
Symp.	*Symposium*
Tht.	*Theaetetus*
Xen.	Xenophon
Apol.	*Apology*
Mem.	*Memorabilia*
Oec.	*Oeconomicus*
Symp.	*Symposium*

Contents

目录

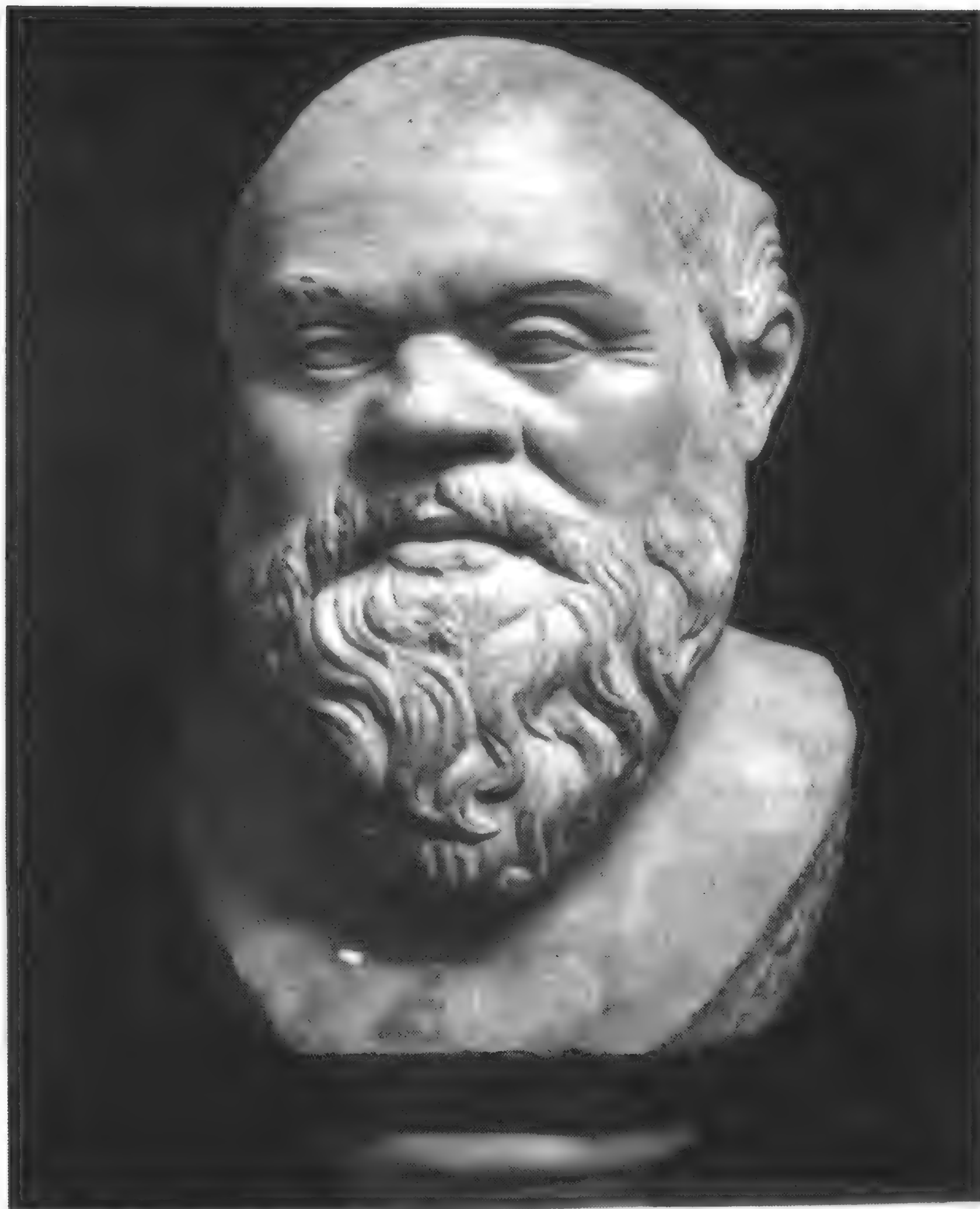
List of Illustrations

图目

Chapter 1
Introduction

Socrates has a unique position in the history of philosophy. On the one hand he is one of the most influential of all philosophers, and on the other one of the most elusive and least known. Further, his historical influence is not itself independent of his elusiveness. First we have the influence of the actual personality of Socrates on his contemporaries, and in particular on Plato. It is no exaggeration to say that had it not been for the impact on him of the life and above all of the death of Socrates Plato would probably have become a statesman rather than a philosopher, with the result that the whole development of Western philosophy would have been unimaginably different. Then we have the enduring influence of the figure of Socrates as an exemplar of the philosophic life, of a total moral and intellectual integrity permeating every detail of everyday life and carried to the heroic extreme of steadfastness in the face of rejection and ignominious death. But the figure of Socrates the protomartyr and patron saint of philosophy, renewed in every age to speak to that age's philosophical condition, is the creation, not of the man himself, but of those who wrote about him, above all of Plato. It is Plato's depiction of the ideal philosopher which has fascinated and inspired from his day to ours, and if we attempt to penetrate that depiction in the quest for the historical Socrates we find the latter as elusive as the historical Jesus of nineteenth-century New Testament scholarship.

Again, there are two main reasons for this elusiveness (a situation which reinforces the scriptural parallel). First, Socrates wrote nothing himself, and secondly (and consequently), after his death he quickly became the subject of a literary genre, that of 'Socratic conversations' (*Sōkratikoi logoi*), in which various of his associates presented imaginative representations of his conversations, representations which focused on different aspects of his personality and style of conversation in accordance with the particular interests of the individual author. Plato's dialogues and the Socratic writings of Xenophon are the only examples of this genre to survive complete, while scraps of other Socratic writings, notably those of Aeschines, survive through quotation by later authors. This literature will be discussed in more detail below. For the moment it should be emphasized that, while each of Plato, Xenophon, and the rest presents his own picture of Socrates in line with his particular purpose, each presents a picture *of Socrates*. That is to say, it would be a serious distortion to think of any of these writers as creating a free-standing figure, for example, of the ideal philosopher, or the model citizen, to which figure its author attaches the name 'Socrates'. Socrates is, indeed, depicted by Plato as the ideal philosopher, and in my view that depiction involves at various stages the attribution to him of philosophical doctrines which Plato knew that Socrates never maintained, for the very good reason that Plato had himself invented those doctrines after Socrates' death. But Socrates was in Plato's view the appropriate paradigm of the ideal philosopher because of the kind of person Plato believed Socrates to have been, and the kind of life Plato believed him to have lived. In the sense in which the terms 'fiction' and 'biography' designate exclusive categories, 'Socratic conversations' are neither works of fiction nor works of biography. They express their authors' responses to their understanding of the personality of a unique individual and to the events of that individual's life, and in order to understand them we must seek to make clear what is known, or at least reasonably believed, about that personality and those events.



1. Bust of Socrates – a Roman copy of an original made shortly after Socrates' death.

Chapter 2
Life

While Socrates' death can be firmly fixed by the record of his trial to the early spring of 399 BC (Athenian official year 400/399), there is an unimportant dispute about the precise date of his birth. The second-century BC chronicler Apollodorus (cited by the third-century AD biographer Diogenes Laertius (2.44)) assigns it with unusual precision (even giving his birthday) to early May 468 (towards the end of the Athenian official year 469/8) but Plato twice (*Apol.* 17d, *Crito* 52e) has Socrates describe himself as seventy years old at the time of his trial. So, either Socrates, still in his sixty-ninth year, is to be taken generously as describing himself as getting on for seventy, or (as most scholars assume) the Apollodoran date (probably arrived at by counting back inclusively seventy years from 400/399) is one or two years late. The official indictment (quoted by Diogenes Laertius) names his father, Sophroniscus, and his deme or district, Alopeke (just south of the city of Athens), and in Plato's *Theaetetus* (149a) he gives his mother's name as Phainarete and says that she was a strapping midwife. That may well have been true, though the appropriateness of the name (whose literal sense is 'revealing virtue') and profession to Socrates' self-imposed task of acting as midwife to the ideas of others (*Tht.* 149–51) suggests the possibility of literary invention. His father was said to have been a stonemason, and there is a tradition that Socrates himself practised that trade for some time; the fact that he served in the heavy infantry, who had to supply their own weapons and armour, indicates that his

circumstances were reasonably prosperous. His ascetic life-style was more probably an expression of a philosophical position than the reflection of real poverty. His wife was Xanthippe, celebrated by Xenophon and others (though not by Plato) for her bad temper. They had three sons, two of them small children at the time of Socrates' death; evidently her difficult temper, if real, was not an obstacle to the continuation of conjugal relations into Socrates' old age. An unreliable later tradition, implausibly ascribed to Aristotle, mentions a second wife named Myrto, marriage to whom is variously described as preceding, following, or bigamously coinciding with the marriage to Xanthippe.

Virtually nothing is known of the first half of his life. He is reported to have been the pupil of Archelaus, an Athenian, himself a pupil of Anaxagoras; Archelaus' interests included natural philosophy and ethics (according to Diogenes Laertius 'he said that there are two causes of coming into being, hot and cold, and that animals come to be from slime and that the just and the disgraceful exist not by nature but by convention' (2.16)). The account of Socrates' early interest in natural philosophy put into his mouth in Plato's *Phaedo* (96a ff.) may reflect this stage in his development; if so, he soon shifted his interest to other areas, while any influence in ethics on the part of Archelaus can only have been negative.

It is only with the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 432, when he was already over 35, that he begins to emerge onto the historical scene. Plato several times (*Apol.* 28e, *Charm.* 153a, and *Symp.* 219e ff.) refers to his military service at the siege of Potidaea on the north Aegean coast in the opening years of the war, and in the last of these passages has Alcibiades enlarge on his courage in combat and his remarkable endurance of the ferocious winter conditions, in which he went about wearing his ordinary (by implication, thin) clothing and barefoot. The latter detail is of interest in linking Plato's portrayal of Socrates with our only unambiguously independent evidence for his



2. A comical representation of Socrates with his 'two wives', by the 17th-century Dutch painter Caesar Boethius van Everdingen (1606–78). The stone on which Socrates is leaning bears the maxim 'Know Thyself', inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi, which was treated in antiquity as a Socratic slogan.

personality and activity, the portrayal of him in fifth-century comedy. Some lines of the comic dramatist Ameipsias, quoted (according to most scholars, from his lost play *Connus*, which was placed above Aristophanes' *Clouds* in the competition of 423) by Diogenes Laertius, refer to his physical endurance, his ostentatiously simple clothing, and his going barefoot 'to spite the shoemakers'; and shoelessness is twice mentioned as a Socratic trademark in *Clouds* (103, 363). Another comic poet, Eupolis, referred to him as a beggarly chatterbox, who didn't know where his next meal was coming from, and as a thief, another detail reproduced in Aristophanes' caricature (*Clouds* 177–9). By the 420s, then, Socrates was sufficiently well known to be a figure of fun for his eccentrically simple life-style and for his loquacity. But, while his individual characteristics undoubtedly provided welcome comic material, it is as representative of a number of important and, in the dramatist's eyes, unwelcome trends in contemporary life that he figures in the only dramatic portrayal to have survived, that in Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

The crucial point is well summarized by W. K. C. Guthrie:

> [W]e can recognize in the Socrates of the *Clouds* at least three different types which were never united to perfection in any single person: first the Sophist, who teaches the art of making a good case out of a bad one; secondly the atheistic natural philosopher like Anaxagoras; and thirdly the ascetic moral teacher, ragged and starving through his own indifference to worldly interests.[1]

In the play Socrates presides over an institution where students pay to learn techniques of chicanery to avoid paying their debts; this is called 'making the weaker argument defeat the stronger', a slogan associated with the sophist Protagoras, and the combat between the two arguments, in which the conventional morality of the stronger (also identified as the Just Argument) succumbs to the sophistry of the weaker (the Unjust Argument), is a central scene of the play. But, as

well as a teacher of sophistry, the Socrates of the *Clouds* is a natural philosopher with a special interest in the study of the heavens, a study which involves rejection of traditional religion and its divinization of the heavenly bodies in favour of the new deities: Air, Aither, Clouds, Chaos, Tongue, and 'heavenly swirl', which displaces Zeus as the supreme power of the universe. Naturally, the new 'religion' provides the metaphysical underpinning of the sophistical immoralism, since, unlike the traditional gods (who are not 'current coin with us', as Socrates says (247–8)), the new deities have no interest in punishing wrongdoers. At the conclusion of the play Socrates' house is burnt down specifically as a punishment for the impious goings-on which have taken place in it; 'investigating the position of (peering at the arse of) the moon' and 'offering wicked violence to the gods' (1506–9) are two sides of the same coin.

By 423, then, Socrates was sufficiently well known to be caricatured as a representative of the new learning as it appeared to conservatively minded Athenians, a subversive cocktail of scientific speculation and argumentative gymnastics, with alarming implications for conventional morality and religion. Such a burlesque does not, of course, imply detailed knowledge on the part of either dramatist or audience of the doctrines or activities either of Socrates or of contemporary intellectuals (though a number of commentators have been impressed by parallels between details of the doctrines ridiculed in *Clouds* and some of the doctrines of the contemporary natural philosopher Diogenes of Apollonia). But both dramatist and audience must have had some picture (allowing for a great deal of exaggeration, oversimplification, and distortion) of what sort of thing Socrates on the one hand and 'intellectuals' like Protagoras and Diogenes on the other were getting up to. We have to ask what Socrates had done by 423 to create that picture.

It is totally implausible that he had actually done what Aristophanes represents him as doing, namely, set up a residential institution for

scientific research and tuition in argumentative techniques, or even that he had received payment for teaching in any of these areas. Both Plato and Xenophon repeatedly and emphatically deny that Socrates claimed scientific expertise or taught for money (*Apol.* 19d–20c, 31b–c, Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.60, 1.6.5, and 1.6.13), and the contrast between the professional sophist, who amasses great wealth (*Meno* 91d, *Hipp. Ma.* 282d–e) as a 'pedlar of goods for the soul' (*Prot.* 313c), and Socrates, who gives his time freely to others out of concern for their welfare and lives in poverty in consequence (*Apol.* 31b–c), is a central theme in Plato's distancing of the two. It is impossible to believe that Plato (and to a lesser extent Xenophon) would have systematically engaged on that strategy in the knowledge that Socrates was already notorious as exactly such a huckster of learning, but not at all difficult to believe that comic distortion depicts him as such when he was in fact something else. What else? One thing every depiction of Socrates agrees on is that he was, above all, an arguer and questioner, who went about challenging people's pretensions to expertise and revealing inconsistencies in their beliefs. That was the sort of thing that sophists were known, or at least believed, to do, and, for a fee, to teach others to do. It was, therefore, easy for Socrates, who was in any case conspicuous for his threadbare coat (*Prot.* 335d, Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.2, DL 2.28 (citing Ameipsias)), lack of shoes, and peculiar swaggering walk (*Clouds* 362, Pl. *Symp.* 221b), to become 'That oddball Socrates who goes about arguing with everyone and catching them out; one of those sophist fellows, with their damned tricky arguments, telling people there aren't any gods but air and swirl, and that the sun's a red-hot stone, and rubbish of that kind.' Rumours of his early interest in natural philosophy and association with Archelaus and (possibly) of unconventional religious attitudes may have filled out the picture, which the comic genius of Aristophanes brought to life on the stage in 423.

Plato mentions two other episodes of active military service at Delium in Boeotia in 424 (*Apol.* 28e, *Lach.* 181a, and *Symp.* 221a–b) and at

Amphipolis on the north Aegean coast in 422 (*Apol.* 28e). His courage during the retreat from Delium became legendary, and later writers report that he saved Xenophon's life on that occasion. As Xenophon was about six years old at the time the incident is obviously fictitious, doubtless derived from Alcibiades' account of Socrates' heroism in the earlier campaign at Potidaea, which included his saving Alcibiades' life when he was wounded (*Symp.* 220d–e). At any rate, it is clear that exceptional physical courage was an element in the accepted picture of Socrates, along with indifference to physical hardship, a remarkable capacity to hold his liquor (*Symp.* 214a, 220a, 223c–d), and, in some accounts, a strongly passionate temperament, in which anger and sexual desire were kept under restraint by reason (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 4.37.80, cf. Pl. *Charm.* 155c–e, *Symp.* 216d) (or were not, according to the hostile Aristoxenus). We are given a detailed picture of his physical appearance in middle age in Xenophon's *Symposium*, where he describes himself as snub-nosed, with wide nostrils, protruding eyes, thick lips (5.5–7), and a paunch (2.19), which exactly fits Alcibiades' description of him in Plato's *Symposium* as like a satyr or Silenus (215b, 216d; cf. Xen. *Symp.* 4.19). (For the snub nose and protruding eyes see also *Tht.* 143e.) Two scholia (i.e. marginal notes in manuscripts, probably written in late antiquity) on *Clouds* 146 and 223 say that he was bald, but there is no contemporary authority for this, and it may be an inference from his resemblance to a satyr, as satyrs were often represented as bald.

Nothing more is known of the events of his life till 406, when there occurred what was apparently his only intervention, till his trial, in the public life of Athens. Following a naval victory the Athenian commanders had failed to rescue survivors, and the assembly voted that they should be tried collectively, instead of individually as required by law. Most offices being at that time allocated by lot, Socrates happened to be one of the committee who had the task of preparing business for the assembly, and in that capacity he was the only one to oppose the unconstitutional proposal. (That is the version of events



3. The Pnyx, the meeting-place of the Athenian assembly: a view from the Observatory.

reported at *Apol.* 32b–c and by Xenophon in his *Hellenica* (1.7.14–15), but in his *Memorabilia* Xenophon twice (1.1.18, 4.4.2) gives a different version, in which Socrates was the presiding officer of the assembly during the crucial debate, and 'did not allow them to pass the motion' (which, given that the motion was in fact passed, must be understood to mean 'tried unsuccessfully to prevent the motion being put'[12]).)

On the final defeat of Athens in 404 the democratic constitution was suspended and power passed to a junta of thirty who, nominally appointed to revise the laws, soon instituted a reign of terror in which thousands were killed or driven into exile. This lasted for eight months until the tyranny was overthrown in a violent counter-revolution and the democracy restored. Socrates had friends in both

camps. Prominent among the Thirty were his associates Charmides and Critias (both relatives of Plato), both of whom were killed in the fighting which accompanied the overthrow of the tyranny, while among the democrats his friends included the orator Lysias and Chaerephon, both of whom were exiled and active in the resistance to the tyrants. Socrates maintained the apolitical stance which he had adopted under the democracy. He remained in Athens, but when the tyrants attempted to involve him by securing his complicity in the arrest of one Leon of Salamis he refused to co-operate 'but just went home' (*Apol.* 32d, cf. Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.3). There is no hint of political opposition, but the same simple refusal to be involved in illegality and immorality which had motivated his stand on the trial of the naval commanders. There is no evidence as to whether he took any part in the overthrow of the tyranny; the silence of Plato and, even more significantly, Xenophon on the issue suggests that he did not.

Trial and Death

Some time in 400 or very early in 399 an obscure young man named Meletus (*Euthyph.* 2b) brought the following indictment against Socrates:

> Meletus son of Meletus of Pitthos has brought and sworn this charge against Socrates son of Sophroniscus of Alopeke: Socrates is a wrongdoer in not recognizing the gods which the city recognizes, and introducing other new divinities. Further, he is a wrongdoer in corrupting the young. Penalty, death.

Two others were associated in bringing the charge: Lycon, also unknown, and Anytus, a politician prominent in the restored democracy. After a preliminary examination (mentioned at the beginning of Plato's *Euthyphro*) before the magistrate who had charge of religious cases, known as the king, the case came to trial before a jury of 500 citizens in the early spring of 399.

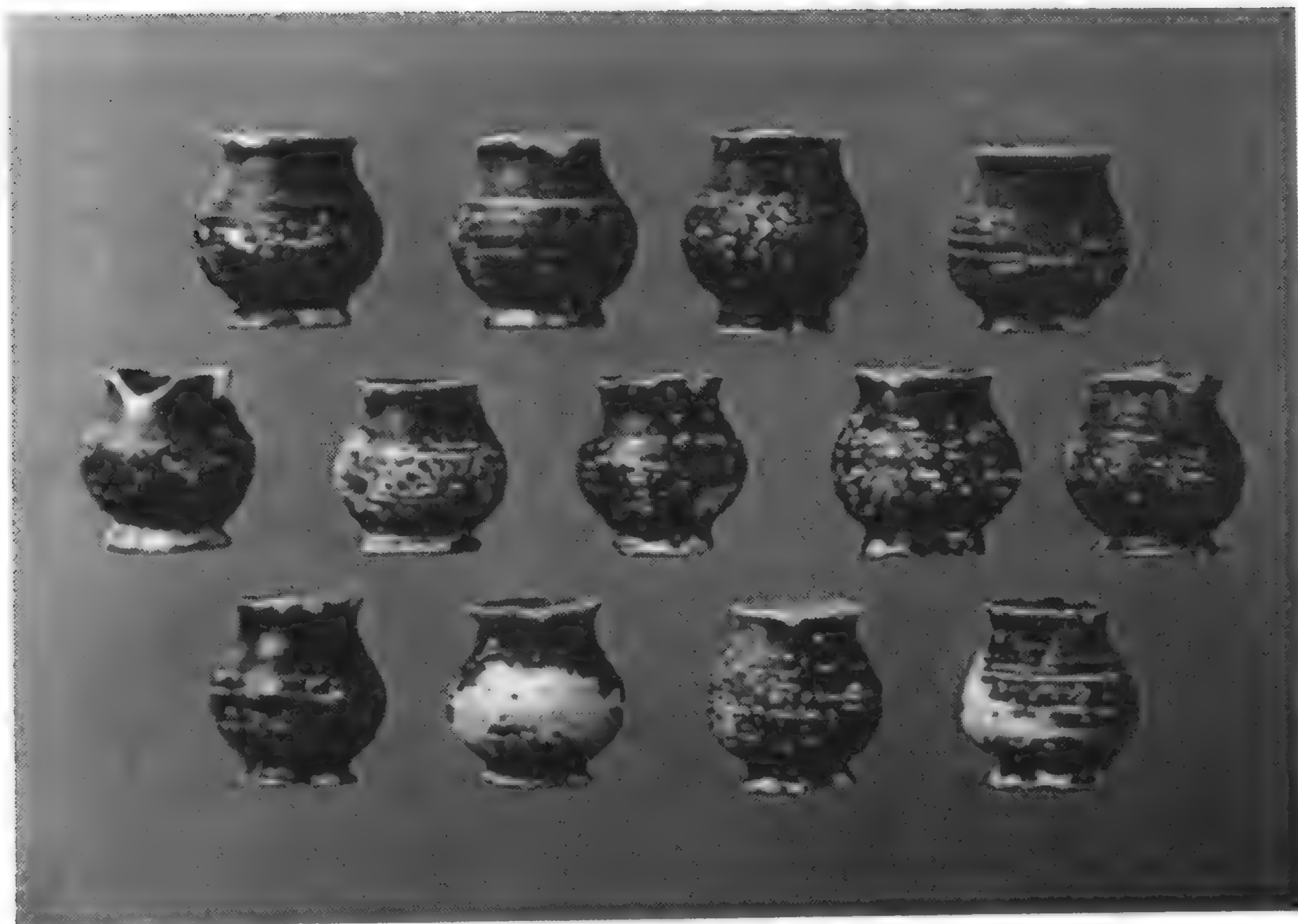


4. Remains of the Royal Stoa or *Stoa Basileios*, the headquarters of the King Archon, who was in charge of religious affairs. Socrates came to this building to be formally charged with impiety.

No record of the trial survives. In the years following various authors wrote what purported to be speeches for the prosecution or the defence; two of the latter, by Plato and Xenophon, survive and none of the former. After speeches and production of witnesses by both sides the jury voted for condemnation or acquittal. According to *Apol*. 36a the vote was for condemnation by a majority of sixty, presumably approximately 280 to 220. Once the verdict was reached each side spoke again to propose the penalty, and the jury had to decide between the two. The prosecution demanded the death penalty, while (according to Plato) Socrates, after having in effect refused to propose a penalty (in *Apol*. 36d–e he proposes that he be awarded free meals for life in the town hall as a public benefactor), was eventually induced to propose the not inconsiderable fine of half a talent, over eight years' wages for a skilled craftsman (38b). The vote was for death, and

according to Diogenes Laertius eighty more voted for death than had voted for a guilty verdict, indicating a split of 360 to 140; Socrates' refusal to accept a penalty had evidently alienated a considerable proportion of those who had voted for acquittal in the first place.

Execution normally followed very soon after condemnation, but the trial coincided with the start of an annual embassy to the sacred island of Delos, during which, for reasons of ritual purity, it was unlawful to carry out executions (*Ph.* 58a–c). Hence there was an interval of a month (Xen. *Mem.* 4.8.2) between the trial and the execution of the sentence. Socrates was imprisoned during this period, but his friends had ready access to him (*Crito* 43a), and Plato suggests in *Crito* that he had the opportunity to escape, presumably with the connivance of the authorities, to whom the execution of such a prominent figure may well have been an embarrassment (45e, 52c). If the opportunity was available, he rejected it. The final scene is immortalized in Plato's idealized depiction in *Phaedo*. The method of execution, self-administration of a drink of ground-up hemlock, was less ghastly than the normal alternative, a form of crucifixion, but medical evidence indicates that the effects of the poison were in fact much more harrowing than the gentle and dignified end which Plato depicts. According to Plato his last words were 'Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius; pay it and don't forget' (*Ph.* 118a). Asclepius was the god of health, and the sacrifice of a cock a normal thank-offering for recovery from illness. Perhaps those were in fact his last words, in which case it is interesting that his final concern should have been for a matter of religious ritual. (This was an embarrassment to rationalistic admirers of Socrates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.) But the idealized quality of Plato's description makes it plausible that the choice of these words was determined rather by dramatic appropriateness than by historical accuracy. On that assumption the point may have been to give a final demonstration of Socrates' piety, but that would have been more appropriate to Xenophon's portrayal than Plato's. A recent ingenious suggestion is that the detail refers back to Phaedo's



5. Thought to have contained poison for executions, these small containers were found in a cistern in the state prison.

statement (59b) that Plato was absent from the final scene through illness. The offering is in thanks for Plato's recovery, and marks Plato's succession as Socrates' philosophical heir. This degree of self-advertisement seems implausible; the older view (held by Nietzsche among others) that the thanks is offered on behalf of Socrates himself, in gratitude for his recovery from the sickness of life (cf. Shakespeare's 'After life's fitful fever he sleeps well'), seems more likely.

The lack of any record of the trial makes it impossible to reconstruct precisely what Socrates' accusers charged him with. The explicit accusations cited above are sufficiently vague to allow a wide variety of conduct to fall under them, and in addition Athenian legal practice sanctioned the introduction of material which, while strictly irrelevant to the letter of the charges, might be expected to influence the jury for or against the defendant. An ancient tradition holds that the real ground for the condemnation of Socrates was political, namely, his

supposed influence on those of his associates who had become notorious for anti-Athenian and anti-democratic conduct, above all Alcibiades and Critias; thus the orator Aeschines asserted categorically that 'You, Athenians, killed the sophist Socrates because he was seen as having educated Critias, one of the thirty who overthrew the democracy' (*Against Timarchus* 173 (delivered in 345 BC); cf. Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.12–16). Given the notoriety of Alcibiades, Critias, Charmides, and other known associates of Socrates such as Phaedrus and Eryximachus, both of whom had been involved (along with others of the Socratic circle) in a celebrated religious scandal in 415 BC, it would have been very odd had the prosecution not brought up their misdeeds to defame Socrates as a corrupter of the young. An amnesty passed in 403 did indeed prevent people from being charged with crimes committed previously, but that was no bar to citing earlier events as indicative of the defendant's character. It seems, then, virtually certain that the charge of corrupting the young had at least a political dimension. It would not follow that the specifically religious charges were a mere cover for a purely political prosecution, or that the alleged corruption did not itself have a religious as well as a political aspect. We have seen that in the 420s Aristophanes had made Socrates a subverter of traditional religion, whose gods are displaced in favour of 'new divinities' such as Air and Swirl, and a corrupter of sound morality and decent education. It is clear from his *Apology* that Plato thought that some of this mud still stuck in 399, and I see no reason to doubt that he was right. Though the evidence of a whole series of prosecutions of free-thinking intellectuals, including Protagoras and Euripides, in the late fifth century is gravely suspect, it is likely that Anaxagoras was driven from Athens by the threat of prosecution for his impious declaration that the sun was a red-hot stone, and the care which Plato takes in the *Apology* to distance Socrates from Anaxagoras (27d-e) indicates that he saw that case as looming large in the attack on Socrates.

There is also some evidence that Socrates' personal religious behaviour



6. The Death of Socrates. *Crito Closing the Eyes of the Dead Socrates* (1787–92) by Antonio Canova.

and attitudes were seen as eccentric. He famously claimed to be guided by a private divine sign, an inner voice which warned him against doing things which would have been harmful to him, such as engaging in politics (*Apol.* 31c–d), and in the *Apology* (ibid.) he says that Meletus caricatured this in his indictment. Of course, there was nothing illegal or impious in such a claim in itself, but taken together with other evidence of nonconformity it could be cited to show that Socrates bypassed normal channels in his communication with the divine, as Euthyphro suggests in the dialogue (*Euthyph.* 3b, cf. Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.2). Moreover, there is evidence from the fourth century that the Athenian state, while ready enough to welcome foreign deities such as Bendis and Asclepius to official cult status, regarded the introduction of private cults as sufficiently dangerous to merit the death penalty. So any evidence that Socrates was seen as the leader of a private cult would indicate potentially very damaging prejudice against him. We have some hints of such evidence. In *Clouds* Socrates introduces Strepsiades to his 'Thinkery' in a parody of the ceremonies of initiation into religious mysteries (250–74), while a chorus of Aristophanes' *Birds* (produced in 414) describes Socrates as engaged in raising ghosts by a mysterious lake, and his associate Chaerephon, 'the bat' (one of the students of *Clouds*), as one of the ghosts whom he summons (1553–64). We have here the suggestion that Socrates is the leader of a coterie dabbling in the occult, and the episode of his trance at Potidaea, where he stood motionless and lost in thought for twenty-four hours (*Symp.* 220c-d) may have contributed to a reputation for uncanniness. While it may seem to us that the picture of Socrates as an atheistic natural philosopher fits ill with that of a spirit-summoning fakir, that dichotomy may not have seemed so apparent in the fifth century BC; and in any case we are concerned with a climate of thought rather than a precisely articulated set of charges. Socrates, I suggest, was seen as a religious deviant and a subverter of traditional religion and morality, whose corrupting influence had been spectacularly manifested by the flagrant crimes of some of his closest associates.

So much for the case for the prosecution. As for the defence, though there was a tradition (which appears to go back to the fourth century BC) that Socrates offered none at all, the weight of the evidence suggests that he did indeed offer a defence, but one which was by ordinary standards so unusual as to give rise to the belief that he had not prepared it in advance, and/or that he did not seriously expect or even intend it to convince the jury (both in Xen. *Apol.* 1–8). (In all probability the story told by Cicero (*De oratore* 1.231) and others that Lysias wrote a speech for the defence which Socrates refused to deliver as out of character indicates merely that a defence of Socrates was among the speeches attributed to Lysias; see [Plutarch] *Life of Lysias* 836b.) It is natural to enquire how much of the substance of his defence can be reconstructed from the two versions which we possess, those by Plato and Xenophon. The two are very different in character. Plato's, which is over four times as long, purports to be the verbatim text of three speeches delivered by Socrates, the first in reply to the charges, the second, delivered after his conviction, addressed to the question of penalty, and a final address to the jury after their vote for the death penalty. Xenophon's is a narrative, beginning with an explanation of Socrates' reasons for not preparing his defence in advance, continuing with some purported excerpts (in direct speech) from the main defence and the final address to the jury, and concluding with some reports of things which Socrates said after the trial. There are also considerable differences in content. Both represent Socrates as replying in the main speech to the three counts of the indictment, but the substance of the replies is quite different. Xenophon's Socrates rebuts the charge of not recognizing the gods of the city by claiming that he has been assiduous in public worship; he takes the charge of introducing new divinities to refer only to his divine sign, and replies by pointing out that reliance on signs, oracles, etc. is an established element in conventional religion. The charge of corruption is rebutted primarily by appeal to his acknowledged practice of the conventional virtues, backed up by his claim (admitted by Meletus) that what is actually complained of is the education of the

young, which should rather be counted benefit than harm. The tone throughout is thoroughly conventional, to such an extent that the reader might well be puzzled why the charges had been brought at all.

Plato's Socrates, by contrast, begins by claiming that the present accusation is the culmination of a process of misrepresentation which he traces back to Aristophanes' caricature, in which the two cardinal falsehoods are (i) that he claims to be an expert in natural philosophy and (ii) that he teaches for pay. (In rebutting the second point he contradicts Xenophon's Socrates in denying that he educates anyone.) In response to the imagined question of what in his actual conduct had given rise to this misrepresentation he does indeed claim that it is possession of a certain kind of wisdom. The explanation of what this wisdom is takes him far beyond Xenophon's Socrates, since it involves nothing less than a defence of his whole way of life as a divine mission, but one of a wholly unconventional kind.

This mission was, according to Plato's Socrates, prompted by a question put by his friend Chaerephon to the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. Chaerephon asked whether anyone was wiser than Socrates, to which the oracle replied that no one was. Since Socrates knew that he possessed no expertise of any sort, he was puzzled what the oracle could mean, and therefore sought to find someone wiser than himself among acknowledged experts (first of all experts in public affairs, subsequently poets and craftsmen). On questioning them about their expertise, however, he found that they in fact lacked the wisdom which they claimed, and were thus less wise than Socrates, who was at least aware of his own ignorance. He thus came to see that the wisdom which the oracle had ascribed to him consisted precisely in this awareness of his ignorance, and that he had a divine mission to show others that their own claims to substantive wisdom were unfounded. This enterprise of examining others (normally referred to as 'the Socratic elenchus', from the Greek *elenchos*, 'examination'), which was the basis of his unpopularity and consequent misrepresentation, he

later in the speech describes as the greatest benefit that has ever been conferred on the city, and his obligation to continue it in obedience to the god as so stringent that he would not be prepared to abandon it even if he could save his life by doing so.

This story poses a number of questions, of which the first, obviously, concerns the authenticity of the oracle. Is the story true, or, as some scholars have suggested, is it merely Plato's invention? There are no official records of the Delphic oracle against which we can check the story; the great majority of the oracular responses which we know of are mentioned in literary sources whose reliability has to be considered case by case. The fact that Xenophon too mentions the oracle is no independent evidence, since it is quite likely that he wrote his *Apology* with knowledge of Plato's, and it is therefore possible that he took the story over from him. Certainty is impossible, but my own inclination is to think that the story is true; if it were not, why should Plato identify Chaerephon as the questioner, rather than just 'someone', and add the circumstantial detail that, though Chaerephon himself was dead by the time of the trial, his brother was still alive to testify to the truth of the story? More significant than the historicity of the story is the different use which Plato and Xenophon make of it. According to Xenophon what the oracle said was that no one was more free-spirited or more just or more self-controlled than Socrates, and the story then introduces a catalogue of instances of these virtues on his part, in which wisdom is mentioned only incidentally. According to Plato what the oracle said was that no one was wiser than Socrates, and Socratic wisdom is identified with self-knowledge. Xenophon uses the story to support his conventional picture of Socrates' moral virtue, Plato to present Socratic cross-examination as the fulfilment of a divine mission and therefore as a supreme act of piety.

Another striking feature of Plato's version of the oracle story is the transformation of Socrates' quest from the search for the meaning of the oracle to the lifelong mission to care for the souls of his

fellow-citizens by submitting them to his examination. By 23a the meaning of the oracle has been elucidated: 'In reality god [i.e. god alone] is wise, and human wisdom is worth little or nothing . . . He is the wisest among you, o humans, who like Socrates has come to know that in reality he is worth nothing with respect to wisdom.' But this discovery, far from putting an end to Socrates' quest, makes him determined to continue it: 'for this reason I go about to this very day in accordance with the wishes of the god seeking out any citizen or foreigner I think to be wise; and when he seems to me not to be so, I help the god by showing him that he is not wise.' Why is Socrates 'helping the god' by showing people that their conceit of wisdom is baseless? The god wants him to reveal to people their lack of genuine wisdom, which belongs to god alone; but why? It was traditional wisdom that humans should acknowledge their inferiority to the gods; dreadful punishments, such as Apollo's flaying of the satyr Marsyas for challenging him to a music contest, were likely to be visited on those who tried to overstep the gulf. But the benefits accruing from Socratic examination are not of that extrinsic kind. Rather, Socrates' challenge is to 'care for intelligence and truth and the best possible state of one's soul' (29e), since 'it is as a result of goodness that wealth and everything else are good for people in the private and in the public sphere' (30b). There is, then, an intimate relation between self-knowledge and having one's soul in the best possible state; either self-knowledge is identical with that state, or it is a condition of it, necessary, sufficient, or perhaps necessary and sufficient. That is why no greater good has ever befallen the city than Socrates' service to the god.

The details of the relation between self-knowledge and the best state of the soul are not spelled out in the *Apology*. What is clear is that here Plato enunciates the theme of the relation between knowledge and goodness which is central to many of the dialogues, and that that theme is presented in the *Apology* as the core of Socrates' answer to the charge of not recognizing the gods of the city. Unlike Xenophon,

Plato says nothing about Socrates' practice of conventional religious observance, public or private. Instead he presents the philosophic life itself as a higher kind of religious practice, lived in obedience to a god who wants us to make our souls, that is, our selves, as perfect as possible. Each author has Socrates reply to the charge in the terms of his own agenda, Xenophon's of stressing Socrates' conventional piety and virtue, Plato's of presenting him as the exemplar of the philosophic life.

Plato's version of the replies to the other charges shows the power of Socratic questioning. The charge of introducing new divinities is rebutted by inducing Meletus to acknowledge under cross-examination that his position is inconsistent, since he maintains both that Socrates introduces new divinities and that he acknowledges no gods at all, while the charge of corruption is met by the argument that if Socrates corrupted his associates it must have been unintentionally, since if they were corrupted they would be harmful to him, and no one harms himself intentionally. As the latter thesis is central to the ethical theses which Socrates argues for in several Platonic dialogues, we see Plato shaping his reply to the charges against Socrates by reliance, not merely on Socrates' argumentative technique, but also on Socratic ethical theory. Plato sees the accusation of Socrates as an attack, not just on the individual, but, more significantly, on the Socratic practice of philosophy, which is to be rebutted by showing its true nature as service to god and by deploying its argumentative and doctrinal resources. Xenophon's reply, by contrast, has little if any philosophical content.

It is clear, then, that the hope of reconstructing Socrates' actual defence speeches at the trial by piecing together the evidence of our two sources is a vain one, since each of the two presents the defence in a form determined by his own particular agenda. The question of whether any particular statement or argument reported by either Plato or Xenophon was actually made or used by Socrates seems to me

unanswerable. Looked at in a wider perspective, it seems to me that Plato's version may well capture the atmosphere of the trial and of Socrates' defence more authentically than Xenophon's, for two reasons. First, the prominence which Plato gives to Aristophanes' caricature and its effects (entirely absent from Xenophon's version) sets the accusation in its historical background and gives much more point to the accusations of religious nonconformity and innovation than does Xenophon. Secondly, the presentation of Socrates' elenctic mission as service to the god and benefit to the city expresses much better than Xenophon's bland presentation the unconventional character of Socrates' defence, and, ironically enough, displays much more forcefully than his own version the arrogance which he says all writers have remarked on and which he sets out to explain.

Chapter 3
Socratic Literature and the Socratic Problem

The account of Socrates' life and death attempted in the previous chapter has already involved us in grappling with the so-called 'Socratic problem', that is, the question of what access our sources give us to the life and character of the historical Socrates. Every statement in that chapter has involved some assumptions, explicit or implicit, about the character and reliability of the source on which it relies. In particular, the account of Socrates' trial emphasizes the different apologetic stances which shape the presentations of Socrates' defence by Plato and Xenophon, concluding that, while we can identify with some plausibility the main lines of the attack on Socrates, our sources merely suggest to us the general tenor of his defence, while leaving us agnostic about the detail. It is the task of this chapter to put that result into context by giving a brief sketch of the extant ancient literature dealing with Socrates and of the genres to which it belongs.

Authors Other Than Plato

On the first kind of Socratic literature, the depiction of Socrates in fifth-century comedy, I have nothing to add to the previous chapter. It is the only Socratic literature known to have been written before Socrates' death, and its depiction of Socrates cannot have been influenced by Plato. It gives us a contemporary caricature, which associates Socrates with some important aspects of contemporary intellectual life, and

which we have every reason to believe contributed substantially to the climate of suspicion and hostility which led eventually to his death.

In the opening chapter of his *Poetics* Aristotle refers to 'Socratic conversations' (*Sōkratikoi logoi*) as belonging to an as yet nameless genre of representation together with the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus, two fifth-century Sicilian writers (apparently father and son). The 'mimes' were dramatic representations of scenes from everyday life (we have a few titles such as *Mother-in-Law* and *The Tuna Fishers*), fictional and apparently comic, classified into those with male and those with female characters; there is no suggestion that the characters portrayed included actual historical individuals. Though Aristotle counts them as belonging to the same genre as Socratic conversations, and Plato was said to have introduced them to Athens and to have been influenced by them in his depictions of character, we should not exaggerate the degree of resemblance, which consists essentially in the fact that both are representations in prose of conversations from (roughly) contemporary life. In particular, we should not jump to the conclusion that because the mimes are wholly fictional, and because Socratic conversations belong to the same gen as the mimes, therefore Socratic conversations are wholly fictional. There is at least one respect in which they are not wholly fictional, in that their characters are mostly taken from real life. The extent to which the depiction of those characters is fictional is a further questio

Ancient sources credit different authors with the invention of the 'Socratic conversation', but there is no dispute that the composition of such conversations was widespread among Socrates' associates, at least nine of whom, in addition to Plato and Xenophon, are mentioned by one source or another as having written them. There is no good evidence that any of this literature was written before Socrates' death and it is reasonable to assume that its authors shared the intention, explicit in Xenophon, to commemorate Socrates and to defend his memory both against the charges made at the trial and against host

accounts such as the *Accusation of Socrates*, a pamphlet (now lost) written by a rhetorician named Polycrates some time after 394 BC. Some friends of Socrates are reported by Diogenes Laertius to have made notes of his conversations, and there is no reason to reject that evidence, but just as we must not assume that 'Socratic conversations' were wholly fictional, so we must avoid the opposite error of thinking of them as based on transcripts of actual conversations. The function of note-taking was not to provide a verbatim record for later publication, but to preserve authentically Socratic material for incorporation into broadly imaginative reconstructions.

Apart from the writings of Plato and Xenophon, very little of this literature has survived. For most authors all that we have are titles and occasional snippets. Some of the titles indicate thematic interconnections, including connections with Platonic dialogues. Thus, Crito is said to have written a *Protagoras* and a defence of Socrates; Aeschines, Antisthenes, Eucleides, and Phaedo all wrote an *Alcibiades*; Aeschines and Antisthenes each wrote an *Aspasia* (Aspasia was the celebrated mistress of the statesman Pericles and the inspiration of Plato's *Menexenus*); and Antisthenes wrote a *Menexenus*. A particularly interesting survival is an anonymous papyrus fragment now in Cologne; [3] this contains part of a dialogue between Socrates and an unnamed person in Socrates' cell after his sentence (recalling Plato's *Crito*) in which Socrates is asked why he did not defend himself at the trial. In his answer Socrates is represented as maintaining, as in *Protagoras*, that pleasure is the supreme end of life, a position taken by the Cyrenaic school founded by Socrates' associate Aristippus (also an author of dialogues). It has been plausibly suggested that the author may have belonged to that school. Another possible association with Plato's *Protagoras is* provided by Aeschines' *Callias* (whose house is the setting for Plato's dialogue, as well as for Xenophon's *Symposium*). In addition to his *Alcibiades*, Eucleides of Megara wrote an *Aeschines*, a *Crito*, and an *Eroticus* (the last on a characteristically Socratic theme, as evidenced by Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* and by Aeschines'

Alcibiades). The prominence of the name of Alcibiades in this catalogue is not accidental. As we saw in the previous chapter, Socrates' association with Alcibiades had certainly fuelled the accusation of corruption of the young and was probably still being used to blacken his reputation after his death; in Xenophon's words (*Mem.* 1.2.12), 'The accuser [perhaps Polycrates] said that Critias and Alcibiades, associates of Socrates, did the greatest harm to the city. For Critias was the most covetous and violent of all the oligarchs, and Alcibiades the most wanton and licentious of all the democrats.' It then became a central theme of Socratic literature to show that, far from encouraging Alcibiades in his wantonness, Socrates had sought to restrain him, and that his crimes (which included sacrilege and treason) had issued from his neglecting Socrates' advice and example, not from following them. Xenophon argues prosaically in *Mem.* 1.2 that (like Critias) he was well behaved as long as he kept company with Socrates and went to the bad only after he ceased to associate with him, and that in any case his motive for associating with Socrates had from the beginning been desire for political power rather than regard for Socrates. (A dangerous argument, for why should desire for power lead him to associate with Socrates, unless he believed that Socrates would help him to attain it?) Plato's depiction in the *Symposium* of Alcibiades' relations with Socrates, presented in the first person by the dramatic character of Alcibiades himself, is intended to make the same point. Socrates' courage and self-control (which withstands the sexual blandishments of the otherwise irresistible Alcibiades) fill him with shame and the recognition that he should do as Socrates bids him, but when he is apart from him he falls under the influence of the flattery of the multitude, so that he would be glad to see Socrates dead (216b–c). The theme of the probably pseudo-Platonic *First Alcibiades* is similar. Alcibiades, convinced that his capacity is greater than that of any of the acknowledged political leaders, is proposing to go into politics, and Socrates' task is to convince him that he is unqualified because he lacks the necessary knowledge, namely, knowledge of what is best. The dialogue ends with Alcibiades promising to be submissive to Socrates,



7. A depiction of Alcibiades being reprimanded by Socrates (Italian school, c.1780).

to which Socrates replies, clearly with reference to their respective fates, that he is afraid that the city may prove too strong for them both.

Ambition, shame, and knowledge are similarly central themes in the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines of Sphettus, of which we possess some substantial fragments. Socrates narrates to an unnamed companion a conversation with Alcibiades, beginning by observing how Alcibiades' political ambitions are prompted by emulation of Themistocles, the great statesman who had led Athens in the Persian war of 480. He then points out how Themistocles' achievements were based on knowledge and intelligence, which were yet insufficient to save him from final disgrace and banishment. The point of this is to bring home to Alcibiades his intellectual inferiority to Themistocles and the consequent vanity of his pretensions to rival him, and the strategy is so successful that Alcibiades bursts into tears, lays his head on Socrates' knees, and begs him to educate him. Socrates concludes by telling his companion that he was able to produce this effect not through any skill on his part but by a divine gift, which he identifies with his love for Alcibiades: 'and so although I know no science or skill which I could teach anyone to benefit him, nevertheless I thought that by keeping company with Alcibiades I could make him better through the power of love.' This excerpt combines two themes prominent in Plato's depiction of Socrates: the denial of knowledge or the capacity to teach and the role of love in stimulating relationships whose goal is the education of the beloved (see esp. *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*).

The only other Socratic dialogue of which any substantial excerpts survive (apart from the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon) is Aeschines' *Aspasia*. This also connects with themes in other Socratic writings. It is a dialogue between Socrates and Callias, whose opening recalls Plato's *Apology* 20a–c, but in reverse, since there Socrates reports a conversation in which Callias recommends the sophist Euenus of Paros

as a tutor for his sons, whereas in Aeschines' dialogue Callias asks Socrates whom he would recommend as a tutor, and is astonished when Socrates suggests the notorious courtesan Aspasia. Socrates supports his recommendation by instancing two areas in which Aspasia has special expertise: rhetoric, in which she instructed not only the famous Pericles but also Lysicles, another prominent politician; and marriage guidance. The former topic is common to this dialogue and Plato's *Menexenus*, in which Socrates delivers a funeral oration which he says was written by Aspasia who, he adds, had taught rhetoric to many, including Pericles, and had written the famous funeral speech reported by Thucydides in book 2 of his history. The topic of marriage guidance provides an interesting link with Xenophon, for the recipients of Aspasia's wise advice described by Socrates are none other than Xenophon and his wife. (The style of the advice is characteristically Socratic, since Aspasia proceeds by a series of instances in which both husband and wife want to have the best of any kind of thing, dress, horse, etc., to the conclusion that they both want the best spouse, from which she infers that each of them has to make their partnership perfect.) It can hardly be coincidence that Xenophon twice refers to Aspasia's expertise in matchmaking and the training of wives (*Mem.* 2.6.36, *Oec.* 3.14). We should not, of course, suppose that Xenophon had actually benefited personally from Aspasia's expertise, as Aeschines depicts; the point is that this was a common theme in the Socratic literary circle, and that whoever treated it later (a question which the evidence seems to leave open) probably did so with the earlier treatment in mind. We must remain equally agnostic about the relative priority of Plato's *Menexenus* and the *Aspasias* of Aeschines and Antisthenes, and of that of the various *Alcibiadeses*. In general, there seems little if any ground for the attempt to assign relative priority among Socratic works, with the exception of a few cases where Xenophon seems fairly clearly to refer to works of Plato.

The Socratic writings of Xenophon and Plato's Socratic dialogues are the only bodies of Socratic literature to have survived complete. In

addition to Xenophon's version of Socrates' defence, we have his *Memorabilia*, four books of reports, mostly in direct speech, of Socrates' conversations; *Symposium*, a lively account of a dinner-party at which Socrates is a guest, similar to and certainly containing references to Plato's *Symposium*; and *Oeconomicus*, a moralizing treatise on estate-management in the form of a Socratic dialogue. The opening of the *Memorabilia* makes it clear that its purpose is primarily apologetic. Xenophon begins by citing the accusation against Socrates and introduces the conversations by elaborating in the first two chapters the themes of his *Apology*, that Socrates was exceptionally pious, of exemplary virtue, and a good influence on his younger associates, some of whom, unfortunately, went to the bad through neglecting his advice. In the rest of the book these themes are developed in a series of conversations, normally between Socrates and one other person, though sometimes it is said that others were present; the interlocutors are mostly familiar figures from the Socratic circle, such as Aristippus, Crito and his son Critobulus, and Xenophon himself, but also including others, such as one of the sons of Pericles, the sophists Antiphon and Hippias, and a high-class prostitute named Theodote. The final chapter returns to the theme which opens the *Apology*, that Socrates did not prepare a defence because his divine sign had indicated to him that it was better for him to die then than to decline into senility, concluding with a eulogy of Socrates as the best and happiest of men, who not only excelled in all the virtues but also promoted them in others.

The work is then essentially a fuller, illustrated version of the *Apology*. In keeping with the character of the latter, the content of the conversations is heavily slanted towards piety, moral uplift, and good practical advice. For example Socrates gives an irreligious acquaintance called Aristodemus a little lecture on the providential ordering of the world, pointing out among other things how the eyelashes are designed to screen the eyes from the wind (1.4), and he encourages the hedonist Aristippus to self-control by telling him a story from the

sophist Prodicus of how Heracles chose the sober joys of virtue in preference to the meretricious attractions of vice (2.1). He discusses the role of a general with a series of interlocutors (3.1–5), helps a friend in financial difficulties by persuading him to put the womenfolk of his large household to work making clothes (2.7), and gives advice on the importance of physical fitness (3.12) and on table manners (3.14). This is not to say that the work has no philosophical content. We find Socrates using methods of argument familiar from Plato, such as inductive arguments to establish a conclusion from an array of similar cases (e.g. 2.3), frequently derived from the practice of practical crafts, and there are instances of cross-examination with a view to showing that the person examined lacks the appropriate knowledge (notably 3.6 and 4.2, where the examinations of the respective pretensions to political leadership of Glaucon, Plato's elder brother, and of a young associate named Euthydemus, recall the similar examinations of Alcibiades in Aeschines' *Alcibiades* and the pseudo-Platonic *First Alcibiades*). Two chapters, 3.9 and 4.6, are devoted to philosophical topics familiar from the Platonic dialogues; the former begins with discussion of whether courage is a natural gift or acquired by teaching, a specific instance of the question which begins *Meno* and is prominent in *Protagoras*, and in the course of the chapter (sections 4–5) Xenophon reports that Socrates identified wisdom first with self-control and then with justice and the rest of virtue. That too links this chapter with *Meno* and *Protagoras*, in both of which Socrates defends the thesis that virtue is knowledge. In 4.6 the topic is definition; as in several Platonic dialogues Socrates identifies the question 'What is such-and-such?' (e.g. 'What is justice?) as the primary philosophical question, illustrating the general point by the examples of piety (discussed in *Euthyphro*) and courage (discussed in *Laches*). In section 6 he asserts the 'Socratic paradox' familiar from *Meno*, *Gorgias*, and *Protagoras* that no one knows what he should do but fails to do it, and in section 11 he makes the related claim that those who know how to deal properly with danger are courageous and those who make mistakes cowardly, a thesis which Socrates argues for at *Protagoras* 359–60.

We can sum up by saying that while philosophy takes second place in the *Memorabilia* to piety, morality, and practical advice, the philosophy which the work does contain is recognizably common to other Socratic writings, especially those of Plato. This raises the question whether we should treat Xenophon as an independent source for those elements of philosophical doctrine and method, thus strengthening the case for their attribution to the historical Socrates, or whether we should conclude that Xenophon's source is those very Socratic writings, above all Plato's. We have to tread cautiously. There are indeed some indications in Xenophon's writings of dependence on Plato. *Symposium* 8.32 contains a pretty clear reference to the speeches of Pausanias and Phaedrus in Plato's *Symposium*, and it is at least likely that the many earlier writings on the trial of Socrates, whom Xenophon refers to in *Apology* 1, include Plato's *Apology*.[4] There is nothing in the *Memorabilia* which so clearly points to a specific Platonic reference, and we are not justified in concluding that any similarity of subject-matter must be explained by Xenophon's dependence on Plato, rather than influence in the reverse direction, or reliance on a common source, including memory of the historical Socrates. (We have very little information about the dates of composition of the works of either Plato or Xenophon.) On the other hand, Xenophon left Athens two years before Socrates' death and did not return for more than thirty years. The bulk of his Socratic writings were written during this period of exile, in which he was cut off from personal contact with Athens and must therefore have relied on the writings of other Socratics, including Plato, to refresh his memory and deepen his knowledge of Socrates. Since the philosophical overlaps mentioned above could all be explained by Platonic influence, and since we must assume that Xenophon made some use of Plato's writings in his absence from Athens, the most prudent strategy is to acknowledge that the philosophical elements in the *Memorabilia* should not be treated as an independent source for the philosophy of the historical Socrates. Equally, we have no reason to suppose that either Xenophon's portrayal of Socrates' personality or his presentation of the content of his conversations is any more

historically authentic than that of any other Socratic writer. He is indeed himself the interlocutor in one conversation (1.3.8–15), and in some other cases he says that he was present (e.g. 1.4, 2.4–5, 4.3), but in most cases he makes no such claim, and in any case the claim to have been present may itself be part of literary convention; he says that he attended the dinner-party depicted in his *Symposium* (*Symp.* 1.1), whose dramatic date is 422, when he was at most eight years old. Some of the conversations are clear instances of types current in Socratic literature, such as discussions with sophists (1.6, 2.1, 4.4) and cross-examinations of ambitious young men (3.1–6, 4.2–3). The presentation of Socrates' conversations in the *Memorabilia* may indeed owe something to memory of actual Socratic conversations, either Xenophon's own or the memory of others, but (*a*) we have no way of identifying which elements in the work have that source, and (*b*) it is clear that any such elements contribute to a work which is shaped by its general apologetic aim and by the literary conventions of the Socratic genre.

I conclude this section by considering another writer who, though not a writer of Socratic dialogues, has been held to be a source of independent information on the historical Socrates, namely Aristotle. (Aristotle did write dialogues, now lost, but there is nothing to suggest that they were Socratic in the sense of representing conversations of Socrates.) Unlike the others whom we have discussed, Aristotle had no personal acquaintance with Socrates, who died fifteen years before Aristotle was born. He joined Plato's Academy as a seventeen-year-old student in 367 and remained there for twenty years until Plato's death in 347. It is assumed that in that period he had personal association with Plato. There are numerous references to Socrates in his works; frequently the context makes it clear that he is referring to the character of Socrates portrayed in some Platonic work, for example, *Politics* 1261^{a}5–8, where he refers to Plato's *Republic* by name, saying 'There Socrates says that wives and children and possessions should be held in common'. Sometimes, however, the context indicates that

Aristotle's intention is to refer to the historical Socrates, and it is with regard to some of these passages that we have to consider whether his presentation of Socrates may plausibly be thought to be independent of Plato's portrayal.

The crucial passage *is Metaphysics* 1078b27–32, where Aristotle, discussing the antecedents of Plato's theory of Forms, says the following:

> There are two things which may justly be ascribed to Socrates, inductive arguments and general definitions, for both are concerned with the starting-point of knowledge; Socrates did not, however, separate the universal or the definitions, but they [i.e. *Plato and his followers*] did, calling them the Forms of things.

Since Plato represents Socrates as maintaining the theory of separately existing Forms in several dialogues, notably *Phaedo* and *Republic*, and referring to it as something which is familiar to everyone taking part in the discussion (*Ph.* 76d, *Rep.* 507a–b), the information that Socrates did not in fact separate universals from their instances cannot have been derived from Aristotle's reading of Plato, and the inference is irresistible that its source was oral tradition in the Academy stemming ultimately from Plato himself. We do not have to suppose either that Aristotle was personally intimate with Plato, his senior by over forty years (though he is said to have been a favourite pupil, and he wrote a poem in praise of Plato), or that personal reminiscences of Socrates were a staple topic of discussion in the Academy. All that we need suppose is that some basic facts about the role of Socrates *vis-à-vis* Plato were common knowledge in the school. It would have been astonishing had that not been so, and the scepticism of some modern scholars on this point is altogether unreasonable. How much this tradition included, beyond the fact that Socrates did not separate the Forms, it is impossible to say. I find it plausible that it included the two positive assertions which Aristotle associates with that negative one,

namely, that Socrates looked for universal definitions and that he used inductive arguments.

Plato

Socrates appears in every Platonic dialogue except the *Laws*, universally agreed to be Plato's last work. So, strictly speaking, all of Plato's writings, with the exception of the *Laws*, the *Apology* (which is not a dialogue), and the *Letters* (whose authenticity is disputed) are Socratic dialogues. There are, however, considerable variations in the presentation of the figure of Socrates over the corpus as a whole. In two dialogues acknowledged on stylistic grounds to be late works, the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, Socrates appears only in the introductory conversation which serves to link those two dialogues to one another and to *Theaetetus*, while the role of the principal participant in the main conversation, normally assigned to Socrates, is assigned to a stranger from Elea (i.e. to a representative of the philosophy of Parmenides). The same situation occurs in two other late dialogues, *Timaeus* and its unfinished sequel *Critias*; in each case Socrates figures briefly in the introductory conversation and the main speaker is the person who gives his name to the dialogue. In *Parmenides* Socrates appears, uniquely, as a very young man, whose main role is to be given instruction in philosophical method by the elderly Parmenides. Even the dialogues where Socrates is the main speaker exhibit considerable variation in portrayal. Some give prominence to events in Socrates' life, notably *Symposium* and those works centred on his trial and death (*Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*), but also (to a lesser extent) *Charmides*. Some, including those just mentioned, contain lively depictions of the personality of Socrates and of argumentative interchanges between him and others, with particular prominence given to sophists and their associates. In this group, besides those just mentioned, fall *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Euthydemus*, *Meno*, *Republic* 1, *Hippias Major*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Laches*, and *Lysis*. In others again, though Socrates is the principal figure in the sense of directing the

course of the discussion, he is much less of an individual personality, and more of a representative figure of philosophical authority, replacable, for all the difference it would make to the course of the discussion, by another; for example, the Eleatic Stranger (or, perhaps, Plato). Such seems to me (though this is a matter for individual judgement) the role of Socrates in *Republic* (except book 1), *Phaedrus*, *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, and *Philebus*. How is this plasticity in Plato's portrayal of Socrates to be accounted for, and what are its implications for the relation between that portrayal and the historical Socrates?

In the nineteenth century investigations of stylistic features of the dialogues by various scholars converged independently on the identification of six dialogues: *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Laws*, as the latest works in the corpus, identified as such by resemblance in respect of various stylistic features to the *Laws*, which is attested by ancient sources to have been unfinished at Plato's death. This research also identified a further group of four dialogues: *Parmenides*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and *Theaetetus*, as closer than other dialogues to the style of the late group, leading to the hypothesis that these constituted a middle group, written before the late group and after the others. Subsequent stylometric research, while confirming the division into three groups, has not succeeded in establishing any agreed order of composition within any group.[5] This discussion assumes the validity of these results.

For our purpose the most significant feature is the virtual disappearance of Socrates from the late group; he is absent from the *Laws* and from the main discussions of all the others except *Philebus*. His role in that dialogue is similar to that in the dialogues of the middle group with the exception of the anomalous *Parmenides*, where he is assigned the role of interlocutor to Parmenides. In *Philebus*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and *Theaetetus*, though he has the leading role, it is rather as a mouthpiece for philosophical theory and an exponent of argumentative technique than as an individual in debate with other

individuals. These distinctions are, of course, matters not only of judgement but also of degree. This is not to suggest that the figure of Socrates in the middle dialogues has no individual traits, or to deny that some of these link him with the figure portrayed in the early dialogues; thus, Socrates in the *Phaedrus* goes barefoot (229a) and hears his divine voice warning him against breaking off the discussion prematurely (242b–c). Moreover, even in the early dialogues the figure of Socrates has a representative role, that of the true philosopher. But what is quite clear is that Plato's interest in the personality of Socrates as the ideal embodiment of philosophy changes in the course of his career as a writer. At the outset that personality is paramount, but gradually its importance declines, and the figure of Socrates comes to assume the depersonalized role of spokesman for Plato's philosophy, to the point where it is superseded by avowedly impersonal figures such as the Eleatic Stranger and the Athenian of the *Laws*. What follows will be concerned primarily with the depiction of Socrates in the dialogues of the early period.

That depiction, it must be re-emphasized, belongs to the genre of 'Socratic conversations', and our earlier warnings against the assumption of naive historicism apply to it as much as they do to the writings of Xenophon and the other Socratics. Unlike Xenophon, Plato never claims to have been present at any conversation which he depicts. He does indicate that he was present at Socrates' trial (*Apol.* 34a, 38b), which I take to be the truth, but we saw that that did not justify taking the *Apology* as a transcript of Socrates' actual speech. In one significant case he says explicitly that he was not present; when at the beginning of the *Phaedo* Phaedo tells Echecrates the names of those who were with Socrates on his last day he adds 'Plato I think was ill' (59b). The effect of this is to distance Plato from the narrative; the eye-witness is not the author himself, but one of his characters, Phaedo, hence that eye-witness's claims are to be interpreted as part of the dramatic context. It follows that what is narrated, for example, that Socrates argued for the immortality of the soul from the theories

of Forms and of Recollection, is part of the dramatic fiction. I am inclined to think that Plato's claim to have been absent from Socrates' final scene is as much a matter of literary convention as Xenophon's claims to have been present at Socratic conversations, and that in all probability Plato was actually present.

In some cases (*Charmides*, *Protagoras*) the conversation is represented as having taken place before Plato was born, and in others (*Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Symposium*) the *mise-en-scène* precludes his presence. Mostly the dialogues contain no claim that they are records of actual conversations, and where that claim is made in particular cases, as in the *Symposium* (172a–174a), the claim is itself part of an elaborate fiction, in which the narrator explains how he is able to describe a conversation at which he was not himself present. The central point is that, for Plato's apologetic and philosophical purposes, historical truth was almost entirely irrelevant; for instance, the main point of the dialogues in which Socrates confronts sophists is to bring out the contrast between his genuine philosophizing and their counterfeit, and in so doing to manifest the injustice of the calumny which, by associating him with the sophists, had brought about his death. For that purpose it was entirely indifferent whether Socrates ever actually met Protagoras or Thrasymachus, or, if he did, whether the conversations actually were on the lines of those represented in *Protagoras* and *Republic* 1. As with Xenophon, it may be that Plato makes some use of actual reminiscence; but we cannot tell where, and it does not in any case matter.

So far we have considered as a single group all those dialogues which stylometric criteria indicate as earlier than the 'middle group': *Parmenides*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and *Theaetetus*. Within that group any differentiation has to appeal to non-stylometric criteria. Here Aristotle's evidence is crucial. Accepting as historical his assertion that Socrates did not separate the Forms, we can identify those dialogues from the stylistically early group in which Socrates maintains the

theory of Forms, viz. *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, and *Cratylus*, as dialogues where, in that respect at least, the Socrates of the dialogue is not the historical Socrates. This result can now be supplemented by some conjectures about the likely course of Plato's philosophical development which have at least reasonable plausibility.

It is reasonable to see in the attribution of the theory of Forms to Socrates a stage in the process of the transformation of Socrates into an authoritative figure who speaks more directly for Plato than does the Socrates of his earlier writings. This is indicated by some other features of these dialogues. The *Symposium* puts a good deal of emphasis on the individual personality of Socrates, starting with his unusually smart turn-out for the dinner-party (174a) and his late arrival as a result of having stopped on the way to think out a problem (174d–175b, a mini-version of the trance at Potidaea referred to later in the dialogue (220c–d)), and culminating with Alcibiades' eulogy, which puts it squarely in the Socratic 'Alcibiades dialogue' tradition. But Socrates has another role in the dialogue, that of a spokesman who reports the speech of a wise woman, Diotima, to whom belongs the account of the educational role of love, culminating in the vision of the Form of Beauty (201d–212c). So, strictly, Socrates does not himself maintain the theory, but speaks on behalf of someone else who does. I think that Plato uses this device to mark the transition from the Socrates of historical fact and of the tradition of the Socratic genre (not explicitly distinguished from one another) to what we might call the Platonic Socrates. Socrates speaking with the words of Diotima is a half-way stage to the Socrates of *Phaedo* and *Republic*, who has now incorporated the theory of Forms as his own. As regards *Phaedo*, we saw that Socrates' death depicted there was not his actual death, and it was suggested that Plato has signalled that the narrative does not reproduce what Socrates actually said. Another indication of this is the concluding myth of the fate of the soul after death, where Socrates steps out of his own person to tell what 'is said thus' (107d). The subject matter of *Cratylus*, in particular its interest in linguistic

meaning and Heraclitean theories of flux, links it firmly to *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, to which it can plausibly be seen as a prelude.

Besides the theory of Forms, two other doctrines which it is reasonable to ascribe to Plato are those of the tripartite soul, which does not appear earlier than the middle period *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, and the theory of Recollection, which is plausibly ascribed to Pythagorean influences encountered on his first visit to Sicily in 387 and which is closely linked to the theory of Forms, explicitly in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* and, arguably, implicitly in *Meno*. Also closely linked to recollection is the theory of Reincarnation, which is the central topic of the great myths of the afterlife which conclude *Phaedo* and *Republic*, is indicated, though not particularly prominently, in the myth in *Gorgias*, is prominent in the myth in *Phaedrus*, and occurs in some of the arguments of *Meno* and *Phaedo*. My suggestion is that the Socrates who maintains these doctrines is a figure through whom Plato speaks, to a steadily increasing degree, his own words in the voice of Socrates.

This leaves us with a group of stylistically early dialogues in which Socrates does not maintain any of the doctrines which I have identified as specifically Platonic: the theory of Forms, the tripartite account of the soul, recollection, and reincarnation. Leaving out of account the two *Alcibiades* dialogues as probably spurious, and *Menexenus* on account of the fact that it is in essence not a Socratic dialogue but a parody of a funeral oration, these are: *Apology, Euthyphro, Crito, Charmides, Laches, Lysis, Ion, Euthydemus, Protagoras*, and the two *Hippias* dialogues (of which the authenticity of *Hippias Major* is also disputed). To these should be added *Gorgias* and *Meno* as, probably, transitional works containing features linking them both to the early group and to the middle 'Platonic' dialogues. This is not to say that the Socrates of these dialogues is the historical Socrates. Plato, like every other Socratic writer, has from the outset concerns to which historical truth is incidental; in Plato's case these are the defence of Socrates and the presentation of Socratic argument as a paradigm of philosophy.

These dialogues do, however, present a picture of Socrates which is coherent both psychologically and (to a reasonable extent, though not wholly) doctrinally. Moreover, that picture is closer to the historical reality to this extent: first, that the kind of discussion which is there presented is probably more like actual Socratic conversations than the more technical argumentation of, say, *Theaetetus*, and secondly, that the Socrates in these dialogues carries a lighter burden of Platonic doctrine.

As far as Plato's portrayal of Socrates is concerned, there is no sharp line to be drawn between 'the historical Socrates' and 'the Platonic Socrates'. The Platonic Socrates is simply Plato's presentation of Socrates in his writings. That presentation, as I hope the foregoing sketch has indicated, undergoes an intelligible development from the portrayal of a highly individual personality engaged in a highly characteristic kind of philosophical activity to the mere ascription of the label 'Socrates' to the lay figure which represents Plato's opinions. The earliest stage of that process, though closer to historical reality, is never a simple depiction of it, and the transition from that stage to a more 'Platonic' stage is continuous, not a sharp cut-off.

The next chapter examines the content of that early stage of the presentation of Socrates. Two presuppositions of this discussion should be made explicit. The first is that, while critical examination of the views of others is Socrates' principal method of enquiry, the aim of that method is at least sometimes to provide arguments in support of certain theses which Socrates maintains, not merely to reveal inconsistency among the beliefs of those to whom he is talking.[6] The second is that the dialogues should not be read in isolation from one another. Some contemporary scholars, reviving the view maintained in the nineteenth century by Grote, suggest that there should be no greater expectation of consistency of doctrine or of the pursuit of common themes in the Platonic dialogues than in the corpus of a dramatist such as Sophocles. I believe, on the contrary, that Plato

throughout portrays Socrates engaged as a philosopher in the search for truth and understanding, and that the individual works which make up that portrayal may therefore be expected to give a coherent picture of his philosophical activity. That is not, of course, to deny that Plato can represent Socrates as changing his mind, or to deny that his portrayal of Socrates changes to reflect shifts in his own philosophical standpoint (some such changes are discussed in the next chapter). All that I am maintaining is that Plato presents Socrates as seeking to work out a broadly coherent position, against the background of which changes and developments have to be seen and explained.

Chapter 4
Plato's Socrates

As indicated at the end of the last chapter, we shall be considering the portrayal of Socrates' doctrines and methods of argument in twelve dialogues plus *Apology*. The following features are common to all or most of these dialogues.

i. *Characterization of Socrates*. Socrates is predominantly characterized, not as a teacher, but as an enquirer. He disclaims wisdom, and seeks, normally in vain, elucidation of problematic questions from his interlocutors, by the method of elenchus, that is, by critically examining their beliefs. In some dialogues, notably *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, the questioning stance gives way to a more authoritative tone.

ii. *Definition*. Many of the dialogues are concerned with the attempt to define a virtue or other ethically significant concept. *Euthyphro* asks 'What is holiness or piety?, *Charmides* 'What is temperance?', *Laches* 'What is courage?', *Hippias Major* 'What is fineness or beauty?' Both *Meno*, explicitly, and *Protagoras*, implicitly, consider the general question 'What is virtue or excellence?' In all these dialogues the discussion ends in ostensible failure, with Socrates and his interlocutor(s) acknowledging that they have failed to find the answer to the central question; in some cases there are textual indications of what the correct answer is.

iii. *Ethics*. All these dialogues are concerned with ethics in the broad

sense of how one should live. Besides those dialogues which seek definitions, *Crito* deals with a practical ethical problem: should Socrates try to escape from prison after his sentence; and both *Gorgias* and *Euthydemus* examine what the aims of life should be. The only ostensible exception is *Ion*, which is an examination of the claim of a professional reciter of poetry to possess wisdom. But even that ties in closely with the general ethical interest of these dialogues, since the debunking of Ion's claims to wisdom has the implication that both poets and their interpreters are directed not by wisdom, but by non-rational inspiration, and hence that poetry has no claim to the central educational role which Greek tradition ascribed to it. This little dialogue should be seen as an early essay on the topic which preoccupies much of Plato's writing, namely, the aims of education and the proper qualifications of the educator.

iv. *Sophists*. In several of these dialogues, namely, the *Hippias* dialogues, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Euthydemus*, and *Meno*, that topic is pursued via the portrayal of a confrontation between Socrates on the one hand and various sophists and/or their pupils and associates on the other. These dialogues thereby develop the apologetic project enunciated in the *Apology*.

These topics will now be considered in more detail.

Socrates' Disavowal of Wisdom

That Socrates denied having any knowledge, except the knowledge that he had no knowledge, became a catchword in antiquity. But that paradoxical formulation is a clear misreading of Plato. Though Socrates frequently says that he does not know the answer to the particular question under discussion, he never says that he knows nothing whatever, and indeed he makes some emphatic claims to knowledge, most notably in the *Apology*, where he twice claims to know that abandoning his divine mission would be bad and disgraceful (29b,

37b). What he does disavow is having any wisdom (*Apol.* 21b), and consequently he denies that he educates people, clearly understanding education as handing on a body of wisdom or learning (19d–20c). Given his assertions in the *Apology* that only god is truly wise and human wisdom is nothing in comparison to that true wisdom (23a–b), the denial of wisdom might be understood as simply the acceptance of human limitations. To possess wisdom would be to have the complete and totally perspicuous understanding of everything which is the prerogative of god. Neither Socrates nor anyone else can hope to aspire to that, and in denying that he has it Socrates is simply setting his face against a human arrogance which is none the less blasphemous for being virtually universal.

But while the devaluation of human wisdom as such is indeed a strain in the *Apology*, in denying that he possesses wisdom and, consequently, that he teaches people, Socrates is contrasting his own condition, not with the divine wisdom, but with a human paradigm of wisdom. This paradigm is realized by craftsmen such as builders and shoemakers who, he acknowledges (22d–e) do possess wisdom in the sense that they are masters of their craft, though they go wrong in thinking that their special expertise extends to matters outside the scope of the craft. This expertise is a structured body of knowledge which is systematically acquired and communicated to others, by possession of which the expert is able reliably to solve the practical problems posed by the craft and to explain the grounds of their solution. The sophists claimed to possess, and to teach to others, such an expertise applying to overall success in social and personal life, the 'political craft' (*politikē technē*) (*Prot.* 319a, *Apol.* 19d–20c). Though Socrates rejects these claims, it is not on the ground that such expertise is not available to human beings, but on the ground that the sophists' activity fails to meet the ordinary criteria for being a genuine expertise, for example, that of being systematically learned and taught (*Prot.* 319d–320b, *Meno* 89c–94e). He denies that he possesses this expertise himself (*Apol.* 20c), but

does not say that it is impossible that he, or anyone, could possess it.

There is, then, no ground to assume that Socrates' disavowal of knowledge is an instance of what has become known as 'Socratic irony', that is, pretended ignorance for dialectical purposes. Socrates does indeed frequently pose as admiring the supposedly superior knowledge of the person he is talking to (e.g. *Euthyph.* 5a–b, where he says that he ought to take instruction from Euthyphro on how to defend himself against Meletus' accusation), but the reader, at any rate, is clearly not supposed to be taken in; on the contrary, these avowals serve to point up the particularly controversial character of what the interlocutor has said, or the dubiousness of his claim to authority. The context of the *Apology*, however, rules out any such dialectical function for the disavowal of knowledge. Socrates is not there posing as deferring to a supposed, but actually bogus, epistemic authority; he is with perfect sincerity matching his own epistemic state against an appropriate paradigm, and finding it wanting.

If the disavowal of knowledge is in fact the disavowal of wisdom or expertise, we can see how that disavowal is compatible with the particular claims to knowledge which Socrates makes. The non-expert can know some particular things, but not in the way that the expert knows them; specifically those particular items of knowledge do not fit into a comprehensive web of knowledge which allows the expert to provide explanations of their truth by relating them to other items and/or to the structure as a whole. But how does the non-expert know those things? Usually, by having been told, directly or indirectly, by an expert. Socrates does not, however, recognize any experts, at least human experts, in matters of morality. So how does he know, for example, that he must not abandon his mission to philosophize, whatever the cost? A possible answer is that he has been told this by god, who is an expert in morality. But, leaving aside questions (suggested by *Euthyphro*) of how he knows that god is an expert in

morality, that is not in fact an answer which is given or even suggested in *Apology* or elsewhere.

One might attempt to dissolve the problem by suggesting that Socrates does not intend to claim knowledge of these things, but merely to express his beliefs. But Plato makes him say that he knows them, so why should we suppose that Plato does not represent him as meaning what he says? As we have seen, Socrates does indeed recognize an ideal epistemic paradigm which he fails to satisfy, yet he claims knowledge in particular cases. The suggestion being considered amounts to this, that satisfaction of the paradigm is to be equated with knowledge, while the epistemically less satisfactory state which Socrates is in is to be relegated to that of belief. But the distinction between paradigm-satisfying and epistemically inferior states can be maintained without denying the latter the title of knowledge, by using the distinction between the expert's integrated knowledge and the non-expert's fragmentary knowledge. (We might, if we choose, talk of the former as knowledge 'strictly speaking' and the latter as knowledge 'for ordinary purposes' or 'in a loose and popular sense'. Plato does not in fact use such locutions, but the essential distinction is unaltered.) We are, then, still left with the question how Socrates, an avowed non-expert in matters of morality, knows the particular moral truths which he claims to know.

The straightforward, though perhaps disappointing, answer is that Socrates does not say how he knows those truths. Consideration of his argumentative practice may give us some clues. Often his arguments seem intended to do no more than reveal that his interlocutor has inconsistent beliefs about some matter on which he purports to have knowledge, and thereby to undermine that claim to knowledge, as Socrates describes himself in the *Apology* as doing. But at least sometimes he clearly thinks that, provided his interlocutor maintains nothing but what he sincerely believes, the critical examination of those beliefs will reveal, not merely

inconsistency among them, but the falsehood of some belief. A particularly clear case is the claim of Polus and Callicles in *Gorgias* that it is better to do wrong than to suffer it. Socrates claims (479e) that the critical arguments by which he has led Polus to accept the contrary thesis that it is worse to do wrong than to suffer it have proved that the latter is true, and asserts even more emphatically at the end of the argument with Callicles (508e–509a) that that conclusion has been 'tied down with arguments of iron and adamant' (i.e. of irresistible force). Yet this very strong claim is conjoined with a disavowal of knowledge: 'My position is always the same, that I do not know how these things are, but no one I have ever met, as in the present case, has been able to deny them without making himself ridiculous.'

Here we have a contrast between expert knowledge, which Socrates disavows, and a favourable epistemic position produced by repeated application of the elenchus. There are some propositions which repeated experiment shows no one to be capable of denying without self-contradiction. Commitment to these is always in principle provisional, since there is always the theoretical possibility that someone might come up with a new argument which might allow escape even from the 'arguments of iron and adamant', as Socrates acknowledges (509a2–4). But realistically, Socrates clearly believes, the arguments rely on principles which are so firmly entrenched that there is no practical possibility of anyone's denying them. Might the truths which Socrates knows non-expertly be truths which he has thus established via the elenchus? While that is an attractive suggestion, we have to acknowledge that it has no clear textual confirmation. In *Crito* (49a) the fundamental proposition that one must never act unjustly is said to be one which Socrates and Crito have often agreed on, and that agreement is to bind them in considering the propriety of Socrates' attempting to escape from prison. The implication is, surely, that the agreement was based on reasons which are still in force; otherwise why should Socrates and Crito not change their minds? But there is nothing

to suggest that those reasons took the form of elenchus of Socrates' and Crito's beliefs.

Our conclusion has to be that, though Socrates treats elenchus of the interlocutor's belief as sometimes revealing truth, and though the achieving of truth by that means provides a possible model for non-expert knowledge, we are not justified in attributing to Socrates the claim that all non-expert moral knowledge is in fact achieved via that method. He gives some indication that he knows some moral truths on the strength of having a good argument for them, but he gives no general account of the conditions for non-expert moral knowledge.

Gorgias is the dialogue which provides the clearest cases in which the elenchus is seen as leading to the discovery of truth, and it is probably not coincidental that in the same dialogue we find Socrates abandoning his stance as a non-expert questioner and claiming expertise. One of the themes of the dialogue is the role of rhetoric in education, that is, in promoting the good life. Socrates sets up a taxonomy of genuine crafts concerned respectively with the good of the soul and that of the body, and of counterfeits corresponding to each (463a–465a). The generic name for the craft concerned with the good of the soul is *politikē*, the art of life, subdivided into legislation, which promotes the good of the soul (as gymnastics promotes the good of the body), and justice, which preserves it (as medicine preserves the good of the body). Rhetoric is the bogus counterpart of *politikē*, since the aim of the orator is not to promote people's good, but to pander to their wishes by enabling them to get what they want through the power of persuasion. It thus promotes, not the genuinely good life, but a spurious appearance of it, as cosmetics is the skill, not of making people actually healthy, but of making them look healthy (465c). *Politikē* is thus a genuine expertise, and in striking contrast to his stance in the *Apology* we find Socrates not merely claiming that he practises it, but that no one else does (521d), since he alone cares for the good of his fellow-citizens.

This conception of Socrates as the only genuine practitioner of *politikē* recurs in an image at the conclusion of *Meno* (99e–100a), where Socrates sums up the conclusion of the argument that goodness cannot be taught, but is acquired by a divine gift without intelligence 'unless there were one of the *politikoi* who was capable of making someone else *politikos*' (i.e. unless there were someone who could pass his expertise in the art of life on to another, as conventional politicians have shown themselves incapable of doing). He goes on to say that such a man would be like Homer's description of Tiresias in the underworld (in the *Odyssey*): 'He alone of those in Hades is alive, and the rest flit about like shadows.' This reference to Odysseus' visit to the underworld in *Odyssey* 11 picks up the description of Socrates' meeting with the sophists in *Protagoras*, where Socrates refers to the sophists by quoting the words of Odysseus (315b–c), thereby casting himself as a living man and the sophists as shadows (i.e. ghosts). He is then the real expert in the art of life 'the real thing with respect to goodness, compared with shadows' (*Meno* 100a), who has (in *Meno* and *Protagoras*) a positive conception of the nature of goodness and (in *Meno*) a new method of transmitting that conception to others. This is the method of recollection, in which knowledge which the soul has possessed from all eternity but forgotten in the process of reincarnation is revived via the process of critical examination.

The development of this more authoritative figure of Socrates is a feature of dialogues which we identified as transitional between the earlier 'Socratic' dialogues and the dialogues of Plato's middle period. It is a particular instance of the gradual metamorphosis of the figure of Socrates into the representative of Plato which we noted earlier.

Definition

Socrates' interest in definitions arises from his quest for expertise. The expert knows about his or her subject, and according to Socrates the primary knowledge concerning any subject is precisely knowledge of

what that subject is. The connection with expertise is made explicit in *Hippias Major* (286c–d), where Socrates tells Hippias how, when he was praising some things as fine and condemning others as disgraceful, he was rudely challenged by someone who said, 'How do you know what sorts of thing are fine and what sorts disgraceful? Tell me, could you say what fineness is?' Being unable to meet this challenge he consults Hippias, whose universal expertise includes, as 'a small and unimportant part', knowledge of what fineness is; if Hippias were unable to answer that question his activity would be 'worthless and inexpert' (286e).

The primacy of the 'What is such-and-such?' question is emphasized in a number of dialogues. The general pattern of argument is that some specific question concerning a subject, which is the actual starting-point of discussion, for example, how one is to acquire goodness, is problematic in the absence of an agreed conception of what that subject, in this case goodness, is. Hence, though the specific question is psychologically prior, in that that is where one actually begins the enquiry, the 'What is X?' question is epistemologically prior, in the sense that it is impossible to answer the former without having answered the latter but not vice versa. The problematic question may be of various kinds. In *Laches* (189d–190d) it is how a particular virtue, courage, is to be inculcated, while in *Meno* (70a–71b) and *Protagoras* (329a–d, 360e–361a) it is the generalization of that question to goodness as such. In *Republic* 1 (354b–c) it is whether justice is advantageous to its possessor. In *Euthyphro* (4b–5d) it is whether a particular disputed case, Euthyphro's prosecution of his father for homicide, is or is not an instance of piety or holiness. Similarly, at *Charm.* 158c–59a the question of whether Charmides has self-control is treated as problematic, and therefore as requiring prior consideration of what self-control is.

The pattern exhibited by the last two examples, in which the question 'Is this an instance of property E?' is said to be unsettleable without a

prior answer to the question 'What is E?', has given rise to the accusation that Socrates is guilty of what has been dubbed 'the Socratic fallacy', namely, maintaining that it is impossible to tell whether anything is an instance of any property unless one is in possession of a definition of that property. That thesis would be disastrous for Socrates to maintain, not merely because it is open to countless counter-examples (e.g. we can all tell that a five-pound note is an instance of money even if we are unable to give a definition of money), but because Socrates' approved strategy for reaching a definition is to consider what instances of the kind or property in question have in common (e.g. *Meno* 72a–c). Obviously, if we cannot tell which are the instances of the kind or property in question in advance of giving the definition that procedure is futile, as is the procedure of rejecting a definition by producing a counter-example, for if you cannot tell whether any instance is an instance without a definition, equally you cannot tell whether any instance is not an instance without a definition. But since the production of counter-examples is one of the standard procedures of Socratic elenchus, the fallacy would be wholly destructive of Socrates' argumentative method.

In fact, Socrates is not committed to that methodologically self-destructive position. The most that the examples in *Euthyphro* and *Charmides* commit him to is that there are some, disputed, instances, where the question 'Is this an instance of E?' cannot be settled without answering the prior question 'What is E?'. That claim does not commit him to maintaining that there are no undisputed cases, and so leaves it open to him to look for a property present in all the undisputed cases of E and absent from all the undisputed cases of non-E, and then to settle the disputed cases by determining whether that property applies to them. (In fact that procedure is bound to leave the dispute unsettled, because the original dispute is now transformed into a dispute over the propriety of widening the extension of the property from the undisputed to the disputed cases. That, however, is another question.)

Socrates' rude challenger in *Hippias Major* does, however, appear to go so far as to claim that it is impossible to tell whether any particular thing is fine before one has given a definition of fineness. When all Socrates' and Hippias' attempts at defining fineness have failed, Socrates imagines himself being confronted again by the challenger and asked, 'How will you know whether any speech has been finely put together, or any action whatever finely done, if you are ignorant of fineness? And if you are in that state, do you think you are better off alive than dead?' (304d–e). We cannot avoid the difficulty by saying simply that this is someone else's view, not Socrates', since Socrates makes it clear that the rude challenger is an alter ego; 'he happens to be very nearly related to me and lives in the same house' (304d). Yet the rude challenger's view is not one which Socrates simply endorses, for he concludes (304e) by saying that he thinks he knows that the proverb 'Fine things are difficult' is true; but on the challenger's account he could not be in a position to know even that. The challenger's view, then, is not after all Socrates' own; it is very closely related to it, indeed (and thereby likely to be confused with it), and constitutes a challenge in that, if accepted, it would overthrow Socrates' entire argumentative methodology. Hence the challenge is to distinguish that view from Socrates' actual, more modest view that there are some difficult cases which cannot be settled without the ability to give a definition. To be an expert in an area is to be able to tell reliably, for disputed and undisputed cases alike, whether any case is an instance of the property or kind in question, and for that, according to Socrates, it is necessary, as well as sufficient, to be able to say what the property or kind is.

The examples from *Laches*, *Meno*, *Protagoras*, and *Republic* 1 exhibit another pattern; here the question which gives rise to the quest for the definition of a property is not whether a given, disputed, instance falls under it, but whether that property itself has some further property, specifically whether justice is beneficial to its possessor, and whether courage and overall goodness (i.e. the possession of all the virtues,

courage, self-control, justice, wisdom, etc.) can be taught. At *Meno* 71b Socrates gives an analogy for this pattern of the priority of definition which suggests that it is the most basic platitude. If I don't know at all who Meno is, I can't know whether he has any property, for example, whether he is rich or handsome. Similarly, if I don't know at all what goodness is, there is no possibility of my knowing anything about it, including how it is to be acquired.

Understood in a particular way, this is indeed a platitude. If I have never heard of Meno, the appropriate reply to the question 'Is Meno handsome?' is 'Sorry, I don't know whom you mean.' Similarly, if I have no idea what goodness is, the appropriate reply to 'Can goodness be taught?' is 'Sorry, I don't know what you're talking about.' Here we have cases where a prerequisite of intelligible speech about a subject, that one should be able to identify the subject, is not fulfilled. Clearly, that prerequisite of intelligible speech does not require the ability to give a definition of the subject. In the case of an individual subject such as Meno one does not have to be in possession of any specification of Meno which uniquely specifies him independently of context; one might, for instance, be able to identify him only ostensively as 'That man over there', or indefinitely as 'Someone I met in a pub last year'. The analogue in the case of a universal such as goodness is no more than the minimal requirement to know what we are talking about when we use the word; but that again does not presuppose the ability to give a verbal specification (i.e. a definition) of the universal. To return to our earlier example, I can know what I am talking about when I use the word 'money', even if I am unable to give a definition of money; it is clearly enough that I can, for instance, recognize standard instances. Now, in that sense it is clear that Meno knows what he is talking about from the very start; otherwise he could not even raise his initial question 'Can goodness be taught?' So the platitude that intelligible speech about any subject requires the ability to identify that subject does not point towards the priority of definition. Why, then, does Socrates insist on

that priority even though the condition which the platitude specifies is satisfied?

To answer that question we need to observe that in *Laches*, *Meno*, and *Protagoras* the search for the definition of particular virtues and inclusive goodness is prompted by the practical question of how those qualities are to be acquired. What kind of definition of those qualities is demanded by the practical question? Clearly, something more than the bare ability to know what one is talking about is demanded, because, as we have seen, that ability is presupposed by the asking of the practical question itself. It is tempting to suggest that what more is required is just the ability to elucidate the dictionary meaning of the term designating the quality under discussion. In the case of the Greek term which I have rendered distributively as 'virtue' and collectively as 'goodness' (*aretē*), a reasonably accurate specification of its meaning would be:

1. An attribute of an agent, one of a set of attributes severally necessary and jointly sufficient for the attainment of overall success in life.
2. The set of attributes specified under 1.

How is the ability to give that elucidation demanded by the practical question? It does indeed advance the enquiry to the extent of making it clear that the search is for properties which promote success in life, but it gives no indication what properties those are, nor, crucially, how those properties are to be acquired. People could agree on that definition but disagree radically in their answers to the practical question, if, for instance, some thought that the properties which bring success in life are all gifts of nature such as intelligence and noble lineage, while others thought that they could all be acquired through practice like practical abilities. The practical question thus appears to demand a different kind of definition from the elucidation of the meaning of the term which designates the property; it demands a

substantive specification of what that property is. A substantive specification will include both the decomposition of a complex of properties into the components of that complex (e.g. goodness consists of justice, self-control, etc.) and explanatory accounts of those properties (e.g. self-control consists in the control of the bodily appetites by reason). That is to say, it provides a theory of goodness, which explains it by identifying its constituents and causes, and thereby indicates appropriate methods of acquiring it.

That the definitions sought are of this substantive kind chimes in well with the demand that the giving of definitions is what characterizes the expert. The expert on goodness should be able to explain what goodness is with a view to providing reliable guidance on how to acquire and maintain goodness, just as the expert on health should be able to explain what health is with a view to providing reliable guidance on how to become and stay healthy. The texts of the dialogues mentioned above provide some confirmation that the definitions sought are of this kind, though it would be an oversimplification to pretend that they are distinguished with total clarity from elucidations of the meanings of the terms designating the properties in question.

That Socrates' search is for substantive rather than purely conceptual or 'analytic' definitions is indicated by those dialogues which either explicitly identify or suggest the identification of goodness with knowledge or some other cognitive state. The most detailed discussion occurs in *Meno* (suggested above to be transitional between 'Socratic' and 'Platonic'). At 75–6 Socrates attempts to explain to Meno that he is looking not for lists of specific virtues such as courage and self-control but for a specification of what those virtues have in common, and illustrates this by giving two model specifications, first of shape and then of colour. Of these, the former is a conceptual elucidation, namely, that shape is the limit of a solid, and the second a 'scientific' account of colour (based on the theory of the fifth-century philosopher

Empedocles) as a stream of particles flowing out from the perceived object, of appropriate size and shape to pass through channels in the eye to the internal perceptive organ. Socrates gives no clear indication that he regards these specifications as of different kinds; he says that he prefers the former, but does not indicate why, except that he describes the latter as 'high-flown', perhaps indicating that it is inferior because it is couched in over-elaborate technical terminology. Despite this expressed preference for what is in fact a conceptual elucidation over a substantive definition, Socrates then goes on to propose an account of goodness of the latter kind, namely, that goodness is knowledge. This is not itself an elucidation of the concept of goodness, as specified above, though it does depend on a conceptual thesis, that goodness is advantageous to its possessor (in Greek, that *aretē* is *ōphelimon*, 87e). Rather, it is the identification of knowledge as that state which is in fact necessary and/or sufficient for success in life, and it is arrived at not purely by considering the meanings of words but by the adducing of a highly general thesis about how success is achieved. The thesis is that since every other desirable property, such as strength or boldness, can lead to disaster, the only unconditionally good thing is that which provides the proper direction of those qualities, namely, intelligence, which is equated with knowledge (87d–89c). Again, Socrates is led ostensibly to abandon that account in favour of the revised suggestion that goodness is not knowledge but true belief (89c–97c) by consideration of the alleged empirical fact that there are no experts in goodness, as there would have to be if goodness were some kind of knowledge (another conceptual thesis). In Socrates' arguments conceptual theses and general empirical claims about human nature mesh to provide the best available theory of what goodness really is, that is, of what property best fits the specification set out in the elucidation of the concept given above.

In *Meno*, then, the practical question of how goodness is acquired leads to a substantive account of goodness as a cognitive state. It is no coincidence that the two other dialogues which begin from that

question, either about goodness in general (*Protagoras*) or about a particular virtue (courage in *Laches*), exhibit a similar pattern of development. In *Protagoras* Socrates' young friend Hippocrates begins by assuming that the way to acquire goodness is to be taught it by Protagoras, but the sophist's conception of goodness as a cluster of only contingently connected attributes is rejected in favour of what is in effect a version of the theory proposed in *Meno*, that goodness is knowledge. In *Laches* the question of how courage is to be acquired leads, after the rejection of various alternative suggestions, to a specific version of the theory that goodness is knowledge, namely, that courage is knowledge of what is and what is not to be feared (194e–195a). This is eventually rejected on the grounds that, since what is and what is not to be feared is identical with what is and what is not bad, courage will then just be the knowledge of what is and what is not bad. But since, on this cognitive account, that is precisely what goodness as a whole is, courage will be identical with goodness as a whole, instead of a part of it, as was the original hypothesis (198a–199e). Hence the dialogue ends with the admission that the participants have failed in their search for what courage is. Commentators disagree on whether this inconclusive outcome is to be taken at face value, and, if not, which of the assumptions which lead to it should be abandoned. The significant point to observe is that here again the practical question leads not merely to a substantive account of the property in question but towards the same account as is canvassed in *Meno* and *Protagoras*.

I do not wish to suggest that at the time of writing these dialogues Plato had a clear grasp of the distinction between purely conceptual definitions and the substantive type of account exemplified by the cognitive theory. The fact that even in the dialogue which discusses definition in greatest detail, *Meno*, which I assume to have been one of the latest of the dialogues I discuss, he gives as model definitions an example of either kind without any explicit differentiation suggests that he had not arrived at any theoretical discrimination between the two. My suggestion is rather that his practice shows him favouring a

kind of definition which we can characterize as substantive rather than conceptual, and that the practical orientation of the discussions leading to those definitions provides an explanation of that fact.

Sometimes the course of the dialogue is even less clearly indicated. In *Euthyphro* the initial question is 'What property is it in virtue of which things (especially kinds of actions) are holy?' When Euthyphro suggests (6e–7a) that it is the property of being approved of by the gods (which is very close to an elucidation of the ordinary Greek conception of *to hosion*), Socrates elicits from him the assertion that the gods approve of holy things *because they are holy* (10d). This excludes the possibility that holiness should be that very property of being approved of by the gods, and points the rest of the discussion in the direction of a search for the kind of conduct which attracts the gods' approval. Here too we may say that Socrates is groping towards a substantive account of holiness, in that the answer would have to be given in terms of a theory of human nature and its relation to the divine, but the dialogue provides no more than hints as to the detailed form of such a theory. The situation in *Charmides* is even less clear-cut, partly because the virtue under discussion, *sōphrosunē* (conventionally translated 'self-control', but sometimes better rendered 'soundness of mind'), is genuinely indeterminate between a style of behaviour and the mental and motivational state directing it. Hence the various suggestions that it is one kind or another of knowledge are less easy to classify as either conceptual elucidations or substantive accounts than the suggested definitions in *Laches*, *Meno*, and *Protagoras*.

Ethics

The search for definitions, then, is the search for expertise, and the possessor of expertise possesses a theory of the subject-matter of that expertise, a grasp of its nature which delivers answers to further questions, both theoretical and practical, about it. In the dialogues discussed in the previous section we see Socrates searching for such a

theory applied to human goodness, in some cases a theory of one of the constituents of goodness, that is, an individual virtue (piety in *Euthyphro*, courage in *Laches*, and self-control in *Charmides*), in others (*Meno*, *Protagoras*) a theory of goodness as a whole. In all of these the search is, at least ostensibly, unsuccessful, in that each dialogue ends with the acknowledgement by Socrates and his interlocutors that they have not arrived at the account of goodness or of its parts which they were seeking. But there are some discernible differences. In the three dialogues dealing with individual virtues the discussion is more tentative, Socrates is not readily identified with any positive position, and it is at least plausible to accept the final impasse at its face value. In *Meno* and *Protagoras*, on the other hand, Socrates argues firmly for the thesis that virtue is knowledge, and it is plausible to think that the ostensibly aporetic conclusions are to be interpreted as not detracting from his commitment to that thesis. In these dialogues, it seems to me, Plato depicts Socrates not indeed as possessing the fully developed theory of goodness which is his goal but at least as having a grasp of its general shape. There is, then, even within the dialogues of definition, a development in the portrayal of Socrates from that of purely critical searcher to the proponent of theory (though not expert in the fullest sense). It is an open question whether this development is one within Plato's perception of the historical Socrates, or the first stage of a development from that perception to a presentation containing more of his own views.

The basis of the theory is the combination of the conception of goodness as that property which guarantees overall success in life with the substantive thesis that what in fact guarantees that success is knowledge of what is best for the agent. This in turn rests on a single comprehensive theory of human motivation, namely, that the agent's conception of what is overall best for him- or herself (i.e. what best promotes *eudaimonia*, overall success in life) is sufficient to motivate action with a view to its own realization. This motivation involves desire as well as belief; Socrates maintains (*Meno* 77c, 78b) that

everyone desires good things, which in context has to be interpreted as the strong thesis that the desire for good is a standing motive, which requires to be focused in one direction or another via a conception of the overall good. Given that focus, desire is locked onto the target which is picked out by the conception, without the possibility of interference by conflicting desires. Hence all that is required for correct conduct is the correct focus, which has to be a correct conception of the agent's overall good.

On this theory motivation is uniform, and uniformly self-interested; every agent always aims at what he or she takes to be best for him- or herself, and failure to achieve that aim has to be explained by failure to grasp it properly, that is, by a cognitive defect, not by any defect of motivation. Socrates spells this out in *Protagoras*, on the assumption, which he attributes to people generally, that the agent's overall interest is to be defined in hedonistic terms, as the life which gives the best available balance of pleasure over distress. Given that assumption, it is nonsense to explain doing wrong by being overcome by pleasure or by any kind of desire; one must simply have made a mistake in one's estimation of what would bring the most pleasure. As Socrates says (358d), 'It is not in human nature to be prepared to go for what you think to be bad in preference to what is good.' There is considerable disagreement among commentators as to whether Socrates is represented as accepting the hedonistic assumption himself or merely as assuming it *ad hominem* to show that Protagoras has no view other than common opinion, but there is no doubt that, independently of that question, the view that the agent's conception of the good is the unique focus of motivation (maintained also in *Meno*) is Socrates' own. This account of goodness as knowledge thus issues directly in one of the claims for which Socrates was notorious in antiquity, the denial of the possibility of action against the agent's better judgement (*akrasia*); in Aristotle's words (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1145^{b}26–7) Socrates used to maintain that 'no one acts contrary to what is best in the belief that he is doing so, but through error', a thesis expressed more concisely in

the slogan 'No one goes wrong intentionally' (*oudeis hekōn hamartanei* (*Prot.* 345e)).

Thus far the theory identifies goodness with the property which guarantees overall success in life, and identifies that property, via the motivational theory just described, with knowledge of what is best for the agent. But that theory lacks moral content; nothing in it shows or even suggests that what is best for the agent is to live a morally good life, as defined by the practice of the traditional virtues, including justice, with its implications of regard for others, and self-control, with its implications of the sacrifice of self-gratification. But if anything is characteristic of Socrates it is his insistence on the pre-eminence of morality. We saw that in the *Apology* he says that he knows that, come what may, he must not do wrong by disobeying the divine command to philosophize, and in *Crito* the fundamental thesis that one must never do wrong (or 'commit injustice' (*adikein*)) is the determining principle of his decision not to attempt escape from prison (49a–b). The link with the motivational thesis is established by the thesis that the best life for the agent is a life lived in accordance with the requirements of morality. Given that thesis, the slogan that no one goes wrong intentionally takes on the moral dimension that 'no one willingly does wrong (or 'acts unjustly'), but all who do wrong do so involuntarily' (or 'unintentionally') (*Gorg.* 509e), the full moral version of what has become known as the 'Socratic paradox'.

The thesis that the moral life is the best life *for the agent* thus has the central role of linking Socrates' intuitions of the pre-eminence of morality with the theory of uniform self-interested motivation which is the foundation of the identification of goodness with knowledge. It is the keystone of the entire arch. Given that centrality, it is surprising how little argumentative support it receives. At *Crito* 47e justice and injustice are described as respectively the health and sickness of the soul; hence, just as it is not worth living with a diseased and corrupted body, so it is not worth living with a diseased and corrupted soul. But

that is not an argument. Even granted that health is an intrinsically desirable and disease an intrinsically undesirable state, the crucial claims that justice is the health of the soul, and injustice its disease, require defence, not mere assertion.

Plato supplies some arguments in *Gorgias*, but they are weak. Against Polus Socrates argues that successful tyrants, who, it is agreed, manifest the extremes of injustice, do not secure the best life for themselves, as Polus claims. On the contrary, they never get what they really want, because what they want is to do well for themselves, whereas their injustice is bad for them. The proof that it is bad for them (473e–475c) starts from Polus' admission that acting unjustly, while good (*agathon*) for the agent, is disgraceful (*aischron*). Socrates then secures agreement to the principle that whatever is disgraceful is so either because it is unpleasant, or because it is disadvantageous. Acting unjustly is clearly not unpleasant; hence by the above premisses it must be disadvantageous. Hence a life of injustice is bad for the agent. Of the many weaknesses of this argument the crucial one is its neglect of the relativity of the concepts. To be acceptable the first premiss must be read as 'Whatever is disgraceful to anyone, is so either because it is unpleasant to someone or because it is disadvantageous to someone.' Given that premiss, it obviously does not follow that, because injustice is not unpleasant to the unjust person it must be disadvantageous to that person; it could be disadvantageous to someone else, and its being so could be the ground of its being disgraceful to the unjust person. (Indeed, one of the main reasons why we think that injustice is disgraceful to the perpetrator is that it is typically harmful to someone else.) Later in the dialogue (503e–504d) Socrates argues against Callicles that, since the goodness of anything (e.g. a boat or a house) depends on the proper proportion and order of its components, the goodness of both body and soul must depend on the proper proportion and order of their components, respectively health for the body and justice and self-control for the soul. The parallelism of bodily health and virtue, which was simply asserted in

Crito, is here supported by the general principle that goodness depends on organization of components, but that principle is insufficient to establish the parallelism. For the proper organization of components is itself determined by the function of the kind of thing in question; it is by considering that the function of a boat is to convey its occupants safely and conveniently by water that we determine whether its parts are put together well or badly. So in order to know which arrangement of psychological components such as intellect and bodily desires is optimum we need first to know what our aims in life ought to be. One conception of those aims may indeed identify the optimum organization as that defined by the conventional virtues, but another, for example, that of Don Juan or Gauguin, may identify a quite different organization, such as one which affords the maximum play to certain kinds of self-expression, as optimum.

The doctrine that virtue is knowledge is the key to understanding the so-called thesis of the Unity of the Virtues, maintained by Socrates in *Protagoras*. In that dialogue Protagoras assumes a broadly traditional picture of the virtues as a set of attributes distinct from one another, as, for example, the different bodily senses are distinct. A properly functioning human being has to have them all in proper working order, but it is possible to have some while lacking others; most notably, it is possible to possess conspicuous courage while being grossly deficient in respect of the other virtues (329d–e). Socrates suggests that, on the contrary, the names of the individual virtues, courage, self-control, etc., are all 'names of one and the same thing' (329c–d), and later in the dialogue makes it clear how that is to be understood by claiming (361b) that he has been 'trying to show that all things, justice, self-control, and courage, are knowledge'. The sense in which each of the virtues is knowledge is that, given the motivational theory sketched above, knowledge of what is best for the agent is necessary and sufficient to guarantee right conduct in whatever aspect of life that knowledge is applied to. We should not think of the individual virtues as different species of a generic knowledge; on that model piety is

knowledge of religious matters and courage is knowledge to do with what is dangerous, and the two are as different as, for example, knowledge of arithmetic and knowledge of geometry, which are distinct species of mathematical knowledge, allowing the possibility that one might have one without the other. The Socratic picture is that there is a single integrated knowledge, knowledge of what is best for the agent, which is applied in various areas of life, and to which the different names are applied with reference to those different areas. Thus, courage is the virtue which reliably produces appropriate conduct in situations of danger, piety the virtue which reliably produces appropriate conduct in relation to the gods, etc., and the virtue in question is the same in every case, namely, the agent's grasp of his or her good.

It has been objected[7] that this integrated picture is inconsistent with Socrates' acceptance in *Laches* and *Meno* that the individual virtues are parts of total virtue. In *Laches*, indeed, the proposed definition of courage as knowledge of what is fearful and not (194e–195a) is rejected on the ground that on that account courage would just be the knowledge of what is good and bad. But then courage would be identical with virtue as a whole, whereas *ex hypothesi* courage is not the whole, but a part of virtue (198a–199e). Given the aporetic nature of the dialogue, it is unclear whether at the time of writing Plato himself believed that the definition of courage was incompatible with the thesis that courage is a part of virtue, and, if so, whether he had a clear view on which should be abandoned. It is perfectly conceivable that he himself believed that they were not incompatible, and that the reader is being challenged to see that the rejection of the definition is not in fact required. What is clear is that the talk of parts of virtue can be given a straightforward interpretation which is compatible with the integrated picture. This is simply that total virtue extends over the whole of life, while 'courage', 'piety', etc. designate that virtue, not in respect of its total application, but in respect of its application to a restricted area. Similarly, coastal navigation and oceanic navigation are

not two sciences, but a single science applied to different situations. Yet they can count as parts of navigation, in that competence in navigation requires mastery of both.[8]

The theory that virtue is knowledge is, as we have seen, flawed, in that one of its central propositions, that virtue is always in the agent's interest, is nowhere adequately supported in the Socratic dialogues. It also has a deeper flaw in that it is incoherent. The incoherence emerges when we ask 'What is virtue knowledge of?' The answer indicated by *Meno* and *Protagoras* is that virtue is knowledge of the agent's good, in that, given the standing motivation to achieve one's good, knowledge of what that good is will be necessary if one is to pursue it reliably, and sufficient to guarantee that the pursuit is successful. But that requires that the agent's good is something distinct from the knowledge which guarantees that one will achieve that good. 'Virtue is knowledge of the agent's good' is parallel to 'Medicine is knowledge of health'. Given that parallel, the value of virtue, the knowledge which guarantees the achievement of the good, will be purely instrumental, as the value of medicine is, and derivative from the intrinsic value of what it guarantees, that is, success in life (*eudaimonia*). But Socrates, as we saw, regards virtue as intrinsically, not merely instrumentally, valuable, and explicitly treats it as parallel, not to medicine, but to health itself. Virtue is, then, not a means to some independently specifiable condition of life which we can identify as *eudaimonia*; rather, it is a constituent of it (indeed, one of the trickiest questions about Socratic ethics is whether Socrates recognizes any other constituents). So, far from its being the case that virtue is worth pursuing because it is a means to a fully worthwhile life (e.g. a life of happiness), the order of explanation is reversed, in that a life is a life worth living either solely or at least primarily in virtue of the fact that it is a life of virtue.

The incoherence of the theory thus consists in the fact that Socrates maintains both that virtue is knowledge of what the agent's good is and that it is that good itself, whereas those two theses are

inconsistent with one another. It could, of course, be the case both that virtue is knowledge of what the agent's good is, and that the agent's good is knowledge, but in that case the knowledge which is the agent's good has to be a distinct item or body of knowledge from the knowledge of what the agent's good is. Otherwise we have the situation that the knowledge of what the agent's good is is the knowledge that the agent's good is the knowledge of what the agent's good is, and that that knowledge (i.e. the knowledge of what the agent's good is) is in turn the knowledge that the agent's good is the knowledge of what the agent's good is, and so on *ad infinitum*. So, if Socrates wishes to stick to the claim that virtue is knowledge he must either specify that knowledge as knowledge of something other than what the agent's good is, or he must give up the thesis that virtue is the agent's good.

Plato represents Socrates as grappling with this problem in *Euthydemus*. This dialogue presents a confrontation between two conceptions of philosophy, represented respectively by Socrates and by a pair of sophists, the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. The latter demonstrate their conception by putting on a dazzling display of the techniques of fallacious argument which enable them to 'combat in argument and refute whatever anyone says, whether it is true or false' (272a–b). For his part Socrates seeks to argue for the central role of wisdom in the achievement of *eudaimonia*. The first part of his argument (278e–281e) is in essence the same as that used in *Meno* 87d–89a to establish that virtue is knowledge; knowledge or wisdom (the terms are interchangeable) is the only unconditionally good thing, since all other goods, whether goods of fortune or desirable traits of character, are good for the agent only if they are properly used, and they are properly used only if they are directed by wisdom. Thus far Socrates reproduces the position of *Meno*, but in the second part of his argument (288d–292e) he goes beyond it. Here he points out that the previous argument has shown that the skill which secures the overall good of the agent is one which co-ordinates the production and use of

all subordinate goods, including the products of all other skills. It is thus a directive or governing skill, which is appropriately termed the political or kingly (*basilikē*) art. But now what is the goal of the kingly art? Not to provide goods such as wealth or freedom for people, for the previous argument has shown that those are good only on the condition that they are directed by wisdom. So the goal of the kingly art can only be to make people wise. But wise at what? Not wise (= skilled) at shoemaking or building, for the same reason, that those skills are good only if they are directed by the supreme skill. The goal of the kingly art can therefore be none other than to make people skilled in the kingly art itself. But, as Socrates admits (292d–e), that is completely uninformative, since we lack any conception of what the kingly art is.

Socrates leaves the puzzle unresolved, and it may well be that at that point Plato did not see his way out of the puzzle. What this dialogue does show is that Plato had become aware of the incoherence of the system of Socratic ethics whose two central tenets are that virtue is knowledge (sc. of human good) and that virtue is human good. If human good is to be identified with both knowledge and virtue, then that knowledge must have some object other than itself. Plato's eventual solution was to develop (in the *Republic*) a conception of human good as consisting in a state of the personality in which the non-rational impulses are directed by the intellect informed by knowledge, not of human good, but of goodness itself, a universal principle of rationality. On this conception (i) human good is virtue, (ii) virtue is, not identical with, but directed by, knowledge, and (iii) the knowledge in question is knowledge of the universal good. It is highly plausible to see *Euthydemus* as indicating the transition from the Socratic position set out most explicitly in *Meno* to that developed Platonic position.

Protagoras may be seen as an exploration of another solution to this puzzle, since in that dialogue Socrates sets out an account of goodness

whose central theses are: (i) virtue is knowledge of human good (as in *Meno*); (ii) human good is an overall pleasant life. The significance of this is independent of whether Socrates is represented as adopting that solution in his own person, or merely as proposing it as a theory which ordinary people and Protagoras ought to accept. Either way, it represents a way out of the impasse which blocks the original form of the Socratic theory, though not a way which Plato was himself to adopt. Having experimented with this theory, which retains the identity of virtue with knowledge while abandoning the identity of virtue with human good, he settled for the alternative just described, which maintains the latter identity while abandoning the former.

Socrates and the Sophists

The confrontation of Socrates with sophists is central to Plato's apologetic project. Socrates, as we have seen, had been tarred with the sophistic brush, and it was therefore central to the defence of his memory to show how wide the gap was between his activity and that of the sophists. Since Socrates represents in Plato's presentation the ideal philosopher, the confrontation can also be seen more abstractly, as a clash between genuine philosophy and its counterfeit.

Plato depicts Socrates in confrontation with sophists and their associates in the three longest and dramatically most complex dialogues of the group which we are considering: *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, and *Euthydemus*. I shall consider those together with *Republic* 1, which may originally have been a separate dialogue; even if it was not, it certainly looks back to the aporetic and elenctic style of the earlier dialogues, while there are obvious similarities between the positions of Callicles in *Gorgias* and Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1. As well as these major dramatic dialogues, Socrates is presented in one-to-one discussion with a sophist in the two *Hippias* dialogues.

The Greek word *sophistēs* (formed from the adjective *sophos* 'wise' or

'learned') originally meant 'expert' or 'sage'; thus the famous Seven Sages were referred to as the 'Seven *Sophistai*'. In the fifth century it came to be applied particularly to the new class of itinerant intellectuals, such as Protagoras and Hippias, whom we find depicted in the Socratic dialogues. We saw earlier that sophists were regarded in some quarters as dangerous subversives, overthrowing conventional religion and morality by a combination of naturalistic science and argumentative trickery. Plato presents a much more nuanced picture. There are indeed elements of subversion, in that both Callicles and Thrasymachus mount powerful attacks on conventional morality. As for argumentative trickery, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are shameless in their deliberate bamboozling of opponents. But Plato is far from presenting sophists as a class as either moral subversives or argumentative charlatans, much less as both. In *Protagoras* the sophist represents his own teaching of the art of life not as critical of conventional social morality but as continuous with it, since he takes over where traditional education leaves off. He defends traditional morality, and in particular the central role which it assigns to the basic social virtues of justice and self-control, by a story designed to show how it is a natural development, determined by the necessity of social co-operation if humans are to survive in a hostile world. He argues sensibly and in some places effectively for his views. Interestingly, neither his claim to make the weaker argument the stronger nor his agnosticism on the existence and nature of the gods gets any mention in this portrayal. Prodicus, who also appears in *Protagoras* and is mentioned fairly often in other Platonic dialogues, is said to have given naturalistic accounts of the origin of religion and was accounted an atheist by some ancient writers, but this is nowhere mentioned by Plato, whose primary interest is in making fun of his penchant for nice verbal distinctions. Hippias is presented both in *Protagoras* and in the *Hippias* dialogues as a polymath, whose interests range from science and astronomy to history, literary criticism, and mnemonics. In *Hippias Major* he has little capacity for following an argument, and there is no suggestion in any of these dialogues of

radical views on anything. Gorgias starts out by claiming that rhetoric, his field of expertise, is a value-free discipline (455a), but is trapped by Socrates into acknowledging that a good orator must know what is just and unjust, and that if his pupils do not know this already they will learn it from him (460a). There is no indication of what his substantive views on justice and injustice may have been; specifically, there is no suggestion in the dialogue that Callicles has derived his immoralism from Gorgias. It would give a better fit with what is plainly meant to be Gorgias' real position if any influence that Gorgias may have had on Callicles were restricted to the rhetorical force which he manifests in such abundance in expressing his atrocious views. In Plato's eyes that influence was no less dangerous than positive indoctrination.

It is worth pointing out that Plato's presentation of the personalities of the sophists is as nuanced as his treatment of their doctrines. At least, they are not portrayed in a tone of uniform hostility. Thrasymachus, indeed, is a thoroughly nasty piece of work: arrogant, rude, and aggressive (he even tells Socrates to get his nurse to wipe his nose and stop his drivelling (343a)), and Hippias is a learned and conceited blockhead, but the others are treated more gently. The charlatanry of the brothers in *Euthydemus* is so transparent as to be almost endearing, while Prodicus is a figure of rather gentle fun. Protagoras, on the other hand, is a much more considerable figure; he is certainly pompous and complacent, and he does get ruffled when he loses the argument, but he quickly recovers his poise and concludes with a generous, if slightly patronizing, compliment to Socrates. More significantly, Plato presents him as someone to be taken seriously intellectually. The speech which sets out his defence of social morality and his role as an educator is a serious piece of work, and up to the concluding argument he is represented as holding his own in debate with Socrates. When we add to this the lengthy critique of his doctrines in *Theaetetus* (something which has no parallel in the case of any other sophist) it is clear that Plato took him very seriously indeed.

Plato's Socrates is not interested in the religious unorthodoxy of the sophists. (Later, in book 10 of the *Laws*, Plato argues strongly that atheism leads to immorality, and recommends institutional means of suppressing it – including the death penalty for those who persist in it – but that is a stance foreign to the Platonic Socrates.) He faces a serious challenge from one strand of sophistic moral thinking, represented by Thrasymachus, who is himself a sophist, and Callicles, who is an associate of Gorgias. The basis of those views, explicit in Callicles, implicit in Thrasymachus, is the dichotomy between what is natural and what is merely conventional. Both assume an egoistic view of human nature, maintaining that, in common with other animals, humans have a natural tendency to seek the maximum self-gratification, from which they conclude that, for the individual, success in life (*eudaimonia*) consists in giving that tendency free play. Law and morality they see as conventional devices for restricting that natural tendency with a view to promoting the good of others; their effect is to force people to sacrifice their own *eudaimonia* in favour of that of others. But since everyone has more reason to favour their own *eudaimonia* over that of others, the rational course for everyone is to free themselves from the shackles of law and morality. (Callicles goes a step further in claiming that that is not merely rational but in reality right or just (*phusei dikaion*), since the individual who is strong enough to exploit others is thereby entitled to do so, and is wronged by laws or conventions which seek to prevent him.)

The moral theory sketched in the previous chapter provided a response to this challenge, though a weak one, since the crucial link between morality and the agent's good was not established. But in addition to this radical challenge to conventional morality, the sophistic tradition provided an argument in support of it, and thereby an answer to the challenge, in the form of the theory of the social origin of morality expounded by Protagoras in the dialogue (see above). This theory rejects the fundamental thesis of the radicals that nature and convention are opposed. On the contrary, convention, in the form of

social morality, is itself a product of nature, since it naturally comes about when human beings are obliged to adapt (by forming communities) in order to survive. So far from its being the case that convention stultifies the development of human nature, it is only via convention that human nature is able to survive and flourish, in the sense of developing civilization.

To the extent that Protagoras upholds conventional morality, especially justice and self-control, he is an ally against Callicles and Thrasymachus. For all that, Socrates finds his theory inadequate. He could have made the point, though he does not in fact, that Protagoras' account makes justice and self-control only instrumentally instead of intrinsically desirable; their value lies in their necessity as prerequisites for the benefits of communal life, but what is necessary is that those virtues should be generally, rather than universally, cultivated. Hence someone who can get away with wrongdoing on a particular occasion without endangering the social fabric has no reason not to do so (the 'free-rider' problem). That issue is addressed in book 2 of the *Republic*. In *Protagoras* Socrates' criticism is that, in assuming the separateness of the individual virtues (see above), Protagoras manifests an inadequate grasp of the nature of goodness. Hence his claim to expertise about goodness (in other words, to teach *politikē technē* (319a)) is fraudulent, and those, like Hippocrates, who flock to him in the expectation of acquiring goodness, are not merely wasting their time and money, but are risking the positive harm of acquiring a mistaken view of goodness and hence a mistaken conception of their proper goal in life (312b–314b).

Sophists, then, are dangerous, but not in the way that they are conceived in the popular caricature. They are a threat, not primarily because they peddle atheism or immorality (though some sophists did promote one or the other), but because they set themselves up as experts on the most important question, 'How is one to live?' without actually having the requisite knowledge. This is the recurrent theme of

Socrates' confrontations with them. Protagoras claims to teach people how to acquire goodness, but proves to have no grasp of what it is. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus make precisely the same claim (275a), but all they actually have to teach is verbal trickery. (Protagoras is clearly represented as making his claim in good faith, but the same can hardly be said for the brothers. The point is immaterial; whether or not the sophist believes his claim, the important point is that it is unfounded.) Hippias claims universal expertise, including expertise on the nature of the fine or beautiful, an aspect of goodness, but his claim proves as hollow as those of the others. Socrates, by contrast, does not normally claim to have expertise. What he represents is the true conception of the task of philosophy, which is to search for genuine expertise in the art of life. What that expertise is is the possession of the true account of goodness, and hence the true account of our proper aim in life.

This conception of philosophy is emphasized in *Gorgias* via the contrast with rhetoric. The art of life (*politikē*) seeks the good, which requires knowledge of what the good is, whereas rhetoric aims merely at gratifying the desires of people who lack knowledge of whether the satisfaction of those desires is good or not. Hence the true expert in the art of life is the philosopher, represented by Socrates, who here, exceptionally, does claim expertise. If, instead of being guided by philosophy, people's lives are ruled by rhetoric, the result is the substitution of the pursuit of pleasure for that of the good, a situation which can lead to the moral chaos represented by Callicles, for whom the good is the indiscriminate pursuit of every pleasure. Gorgias, it seems, does not himself claim to teach goodness, unlike the sophists; the dialogue is then, unlike the others we have discussed, a critique not of an unfounded claim to expertise, but of the misguided practice (characteristic, in Plato's view, of Athenian democracy) of assigning to the technique of persuasion the role which properly belongs to philosophical enquiry, that of identifying fundamental values.

Chapter 5
Socrates and Later Philosophy

Ancient Philosophy

From the modern perspective by far the most important legacy of Socrates was his influence on Plato. But we have seen that Plato was one of a number of associates who wrote about him in the generation immediately after his death and who were themselves influenced by him in one way or another. In this section I shall trace briefly the main ways in which the influence of Socrates was transmitted to later generations, by personal association and via the writings of Plato and others.

We may begin with two personal associates of Socrates, Antisthenes and Aristippus. Antisthenes is said to have been originally a pupil of Gorgias who transferred his allegiance to Socrates. He appears to have been a sophist in the traditional style, who wrote on a wide range of subjects, many of them remote from the interests of Socrates, who concentrated on ethics. His interests in the nature of language and its relation to reality, and in particular his denial of the possibility of contradiction, link him rather with Socrates' sophistic opponents, notably Prodicus and Protagoras, both of whom are said to have maintained that thesis. He thus appears as an eclectic figure, in whom the specifically Socratic influence is manifested in his adherence to some of Socrates' ethical doctrines and in his austere style of life. He maintained that goodness can be taught and that it is sufficient for

happiness, adding the significant rider 'requiring nothing more in addition than Socratic strength' (DL 6.10–11). The rider suggests a shift from the Socratic denial of the possibility of *akrasia* (action against one's better judgement); knowledge of the agent's good does not by itself guarantee pursuit of it, as Socrates had held, but in addition the agent must acquire sufficient strength to adhere to his or her judgement of what is best, which implies that that judgement needs to be defended against the possibility of erosion by conflicting desires. (Plato indicates a similar modification at *Rep*. 429c, where he defines courage as 'retention, amid pleasures and desires and fears, of the belief inculcated by law and education about what is fearful and what is not'.) Socratic strength was to be promoted by a life of physical austerity, eschewing all pleasures except those appropriate to such a life. It thus appears that that aspect of Socrates' life-style was as significant an influence on Antisthenes as his doctrines. Subsequently, extreme austerity became the trademark of the Cynics, who combined it with rejection of normal social conventions as an expression of their central tenet that the good was life in conformity with nature. Later Antisthenes was said to have been the founder of the Cynic sect. Rather than any doctrinal or organizational influence, of which there is no evidence, this reflects the tradition of the transmission of the Socratic life-style, as Diogenes Laertius explicitly reports (6.2): Antisthenes, he says, 'taking over his endurance from him [i.e. Socrates] and emulating his immunity from feeling became the founder of Cynicism'.

Aristippus was a native of Cyrene in North Africa who was attracted to Athens by the reputation of Socrates. He, too, wrote in a number of areas, including ethics, theory of language, and history, and is said to have been the first of Socrates' associates to follow the sophists' practice of charging fees for teaching. He is reputed to have been the founder of the Cyrenaic school, which was influential in the fourth and third centuries BC, but since all our information about Cyrenaic doctrine dates from after the foundation of the school there is no reliable



8. A detail from Raphael's *The School of Athens* (1508–11), which portrays the most famous thinkers of ancient Greece. Plato and Aristotle are in the centre, with Socrates to the left of them, addressing a group of bystanders.

indication whether any of its doctrines were maintained by Aristippus himself. The principal tenets of the school were the ethical doctrine that the sensory pleasure of the present moment is the supreme good, and the epistemological doctrine that the only things that can be known are present sense-impressions. These are connected by the sceptical implications of the latter. By that doctrine the past and the future are equally inaccessible; hence the only rational aim is some feature of present experience. The claim of pleasure to be that feature was supported by the argument that all living things pursue pleasure and shun pain. Uniquely among Greek philosophers the Cyrenaics rejected the claim of *eudaimonia* to be the supreme good, on the strength of this sceptical argument; *eudaimonia* involves assessing life as a whole, but such assessment is impossible given the unknowability of anything but the present. Hence the wise person's goal should be, not *eudaimonia*, but the pleasure of the moment.

It is hard to see much trace of Socratic influence in these doctrines. The doctrine that the supreme good is the pleasure of the moment is closer to the view of Callicles than to that of Socrates, and though some later sceptics claimed Socrates as their ancestor, that was not on the strength of the thesis that the only knowable things are current sense-impressions, which is a version of the Protagorean position criticized in *Theaetetus*. On the other hand, some evidence of the views of Aristippus preserved by Eusebius suggests something closer to recognizably Socratic positions. According to this, he taught that pleasure is to be pursued, not unconditionally, but provided it does not endanger self-control, which results from education, self-knowledge, study, and endurance (*karteria*), the very word which was the key term in Antisthenes' ascetic morality. It is then plausible to suggest that the doctrine that momentary pleasure is the supreme good represents a position developed by the school, subsequent to the time of Aristippus himself, when the influence of sceptical doctrines had become more prominent.

Most of the ancient biographical evidence about Aristippus concerns his luxurious mode of life, and he appears in that aspect in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, where Socrates admonishes him by telling him Prodicus' fable of the Choice of Heracles (2.1). The moral of this is the broadly Antisthenean one that a life of simplicity and hard toil brings greater pleasure in the long run than a life of luxury. The appeal is to long-term considerations, and there is no suggestion that Aristippus has any theoretical grounds for rejecting that appeal. We might then suggest that the contrast between Antisthenes and Aristippus may not have been an extreme doctrinal antithesis, but rather a matter of temperament, Antisthenes being attracted by the ascetic aspects of Socrates' life to the extent of elevating them to the status of a moral ideal, while Aristippus may have felt that the Socratic ideals of self-knowledge and self-control could be accommodated to a more easy-going way of life. It is worth recalling some less stern aspects of the figure of Socrates, such as his exceptional capacity to enjoy food and drink (Pl. *Symp.* 220a), and his erotic reputation. The hedonistic Socrates presented in *Protagoras* may have been taken by some to represent his actual views, as is suggested by the papyrus mentioned above, where Socrates is counted among those who think that pleasure is the best goal in life. It is a striking fact (commented on by Augustine (*City of God* 8.3)) that the figure of Socrates was sufficiently plastic to allow two such contrasting life-styles as those of Antisthenes and Aristippus both to count as in certain respects Socratic.

The connection of Socrates with the Cynics via Antisthenes developed into a connection with Stoicism, since the Stoics saw themselves as heirs both of the Cynics and of Socrates. The succession of leaders of the schools drawn up by Hellenistic historians (exhibited in the order of lives in DL 6–7) runs from Antisthenes via Diogenes of Sinope (who was described as 'Socrates gone mad' (DL 6.54)) and Crates to Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism; Zeno is said to have been converted to philosophy by reading Xenophon's *Memorabilia* on a visit to Athens, and to have asked where he could find someone like Socrates, in

answer to which he was advised to associate with Crates. From the Cynics the Stoics took the central doctrine of the life according to nature as the supreme human good. It was, however, Socrates rather than the Cynics whom they took to reveal what the life according to nature consisted in. For the Stoics, the life according to nature was the life appropriate to each kind of living thing, whereby it fitted into its place in the perfect order of nature as a whole. Human beings are rational creatures, and life according to nature for humans is therefore life in accordance with reason. Since there is no distinction of rational and non-rational elements in the human soul, there is no distinction between moral virtue and rationality. The Stoics thus accepted the cardinal doctrines of Socratic ethics, that virtue is knowledge, and that virtue is sufficient for *eudaimonia*. The doctrine of *Meno* and *Euthydemus* that virtue (= knowledge) is the only unconditional good they interpreted in the strong sense that virtue is the only good, everything else being 'indifferent', that is, neither good nor bad. Aristo, a follower of Zeno, maintained the thesis of the Unity of the Virtues, interpreting it as the thesis that the names of the different virtues are alternative characterizations of the knowledge of good and bad, differentiated by reference to the relation of that knowledge to different circumstances.

The Stoics thus held both the doctrines which we saw to lead to an impasse in Socratic ethics, that virtue is knowledge (sc. of the good) and that virtue is the only good, and their critics were not slow to claim that they too had no escape: Plutarch alleges (*Common Notions* 1072b) that when asked what the good is they say 'Nothing but intelligence' and when asked what intelligence is say 'Nothing but knowledge of goods', referring directly to the passage in *Euthydemus* (292e) where the difficulty was originally raised. But their doctrine that human goodness is conformity with the perfect order of nature gives them an escape route. Human goodness is knowledge of goodness indeed, but it is not thereby knowledge of nothing other than human goodness, that is, knowledge of itself. It is knowledge of the goodness

of the universe, i.e. conformity to the goodness of the universe by the realization of perfect rationality in the soul. But now it seems that the difficulty has been merely postponed; for rationality has to consist in making the right choices, that is, choices of what is good in preference to what is bad, and if nothing is good or bad but virtue and vice respectively we have after all no informative account of what goodness is. This problem exercised the Stoics, some of whom sought to find a solution in a distinction among 'indifferent' things between 'preferred indifferents' such as health and 'unpreferred indifferents' such as sickness. Neither kind of indifferent is better or worse than the other, but nature prompts us to seek the preferred and shun the unpreferred, and goodness consists in making the right choices in accordance with these natural promptings. Critics such as Plutarch (*Stoic Contradictions* 1047–8) claimed that by this manoeuvre the Stoics were attempting to have their cake and eat it, in that they had to claim that the choice of indifferents was both a matter of the utmost concern and a matter of no concern at all. The many fascinating issues which this raises cannot be pursued here.

The dependence in Stoic thought of human goodness on the rational order of the universe presented a special difficulty for their claim to follow Socrates, in that it makes knowledge of nature prior to ethical knowledge, whereas Socrates had famously eschewed interest in natural philosophy and confined himself to ethics (Xen. *Mem.* 1. 1. 16, Aristotle *Metaphysics* 987^{b}1–2). Yet they could find passages in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* where Socrates draws moral implications from general considerations about nature. In 1.4 Socrates seeks to convert the atheist Aristodemus by arguing for the existence of the gods and their care for humans from the providential design of the human body. In the course of this discussion he argues that human intelligence must be a portion of a larger quantity of intelligence pervading the world, just as the physical elements which compose the human body are portions of the larger totalities of those elements; later he says that the intelligence which is in the universe organizes

everything as best pleases it and that the divine sees and hears everything and is everywhere and takes care of everything all at once. This certainly can be read as foreshadowing the Stoic picture of the cosmos as itself a divine, intelligent, self-organizing being, and both Cicero (*De Natura Deorum* 2.6.18) and Sextus (*Adversus Mathematicos* 9.92–104) refer explicitly to this passage of Xenophon as a source of Stoic argument for cosmic rationality. (A similar argument occurs in *Memorabilia* 4.3, with special reference to the gods' care for humans as evinced in their conferring rationality and language on them.) Another passage of *Memorabilia* which strikingly anticipates Stoic doctrine is 4.4, where Socrates and Hippias agree that there are some universal, unwritten moral laws, for example, that one should worship the gods and honour one's parents, which are not the product of human convention as are the laws of particular communities, but are laid down by the gods for all men, and sanctioned by inevitable punishment. For a detailed Stoic parallel (so close as to raise the possibility of imitation) see Cicero, *Republic* 3.33.

According to the first-century BC Epicurean Philodemus the Stoics wished to be called Socratics, and Socrates remained a paradigm of the sage throughout their history. His acceptance of death was a model of how the wise man should confront death, as is reflected in descriptions of famous Stoic suicides such as that of Seneca. To Epictetus, writing in the first and second centuries AD, he is the sage *par excellence*, whose influence he sums up in the words 'Now that Socrates is dead, the memory of what he did or said when alive is no less or even more beneficial to men' (*Discourses* 4.1.169).

There were two principal traditions of philosophical scepticism in antiquity, the Pyrrhonians and the Academics. The former traced their philosophical ancestry from the fourth-century Pyrrho of Elis, who like Socrates wrote nothing himself and for that reason remains a somewhat elusive figure. There is no firm evidence that adherents of this school regarded Socrates as a sceptic. In the works of Sextus

Empiricus, who is our principal source for Pyrrhonian scepticism, Socrates is almost invariably listed among the dogmatists, that is, those who maintained positive doctrines as opposed to suspending judgement on all questions as the sceptics recommended; only once (*Adversus Mathematicos* 7.264) is Socrates cited as suspending judgement, on the strength of his ironical statement at *Phaedrus* 230a that he is so far from self-knowledge that he does not know whether he is a man or a many-headed monster. For the Academics the situation was different. The Academy was Plato's own school, which embraced scepticism under the leadership of Arcesilaus just over a century after its foundation and remained a sceptical school for over two hundred years until it reverted to dogmatism under Antiochus of Ascalon. Arcesilaus claimed that in embracing scepticism he was remaining faithful to the spirit of both Socrates and Plato, whose philosophical practice he claimed to have been sceptical, not dogmatic.

Cicero, our main source, makes it clear that Arcesilaus saw Socrates' argumentative practice as purely negative and *ad hominem*; he maintained no doctrines himself, but merely asked others what they thought and argued against them. In the dialogues we do indeed find many cases where Socrates' interlocutors are brought to an impasse by the revelation of inconsistency in their beliefs; Arcesilaus interpreted this outcome as supporting the general sceptical position that there is nothing which the senses or the mind can grasp as certain (*De Oratore* 3.67; cf. *De Finibus* 2.2, 5.10). He attributed to Socrates the paradoxical claim that he knew nothing except this, that he knew nothing (*Academica* 1.45; cf. 2.74), and criticized him on the ground that he should not have claimed to know even that.

Our previous discussion should have made it clear that while Arcesilaus' reading of Socrates does pick out genuine features of his argumentative practice, it is unduly selective. His profession of ignorance is a denial that he possesses wisdom or expertise, which is compatible with the claims (a) that he knows some things in a non-expert way, and (b) that others know some things as experts. He

neither claims that he knows nothing, nor does he claim that he knows that he knows nothing. He never draws from the negative outcome of his examinations of others the *universal thesis that there is nothing* which the senses or the mind can grasp as certain. On the contrary, he thinks that knowledge is identical with the good, and takes the *negative outcome of his enquiries as a stimulus* to the further search for it. Of course, the sceptic is entitled to maintain that the search for knowledge is not incompatible with scepticism. A *skeptikos* is a searcher, and the sceptic continually searches for knowledge, which constantly eludes him. But despite the claim to be engaged on an ongoing search for knowledge, the sceptic is committed to a general pessimism about the human capacity to achieve it; in Arcesilaus' version 'there is nothing which *can* [my emphasis] be grasped as certain by the mind or the senses'. It is not just that any enquiry so far undertaken has failed to reach certainty. The sceptic believes in advance that that will be the outcome on any occasion and has some general strategies, such as the appeal to conflicting appearances or arguments, to show that it must. There is no trace of that pessimism in Plato's portrayal of Socrates.

Not all subsequent philosophers were well disposed towards Socrates. Some of Aristotle's successors were hostile, notably Aristoxenus, whose malicious biography was the source of the story of Socrates' bigamy; it attracted a rejoinder from the Stoic Panaetius. The most consistent hostility came from the Epicureans. True to their tradition of abusive comments on non-Epicurean philosophers, a succession of Epicureans made rude remarks about Socrates. Typical of these are some remarks of Colotes which Plutarch cites, describing the story of the oracle given to Chaerephon as 'a completely cheap and sophistical tale' (*Against Colotes* 1116e–f), and Socrates' arguments as so much boasting or quackery (*alazonas*) on the ground that they were discordant with what he actually did (1117d; presumably Colotes had in mind some instances of Socrates' ironical professions of admiration of his interlocutors). As both the Stoics and the sceptical Academics were

regarded by the Epicureans as professional rivals, it is plausible that the Epicureans' hostility to Socrates stemmed in part from the position which he was accorded by those schools.

The tendency to appropriate Socrates as a precursor was not restricted to pagan philosophers. Writing in the second century AD the Christian apologist Justin cited the example of Socrates in rebuttal of the accusation of atheism levelled at the Christians. Like them, he claimed, Socrates was accused of atheism because he rejected the fables of the Olympian gods and urged the worship of one true God. Socrates had thus had some partial grasp of the coming revelation through Christ, since, though philosophers are responsible for their own errors and contradictions through their limited grasp of the truth 'whatever has been well said by them belongs to us Christians'.

Medieval and Modern Philosophy

The Christianization of Socrates so strikingly expressed by Justin was not the beginning of a continuous tradition. Though Augustine was influenced by Plato to the extent of speculating that he might have known the Old Testament scriptures, he does not follow Justin in claiming Socrates for Christianity. While some Christian writers praise Socrates as a good man unjustly put to death, most of those who mention him refer with disapproval to his 'idolatry', citing his divine sign (interpreted by some, including Tertullian, as communications from a demon), his sacrifice to Asclepius, and his oaths 'By the dog', etc. To the extent that the Platonic tradition retained its vitality in the early medieval period it concentrated on later Platonic works, especially *Timaeus*, in which the personality of Socrates plays an insignificant role, and from the twelfth century onwards the influence of Plato was largely eclipsed in the West by that of Aristotle. The major medieval philosophers show little or no interest in Socrates, and it is not until the revival of Platonism in the late fifteenth century that any significant interest in him re-emerges. As part of the neo-Platonist



9. Frontispiece drawn by Matthew Paris of St Albans (*d.* 1259) for a fortune-telling tract, *The Prognostics of Socrates the King*. The pop-eyed appearance of the figure named 'Plato' and the fact that 'Socrates' is writing to 'Plato's' dictation suggests that the names have been transposed. The image appears on a postcard, referred to in the title of Jacques Derrida's work *La Carte Postale*.

programme of interpreting Platonism as an allegorical expression of Christian truth we find the Florentine Marsilio Ficino drawing detailed parallels between the trials and deaths of Socrates and Jesus, and this tradition was continued by Erasmus (one of whose dialogues contains the expression 'Saint Socrates, pray for us') in a comparison between Christ in the garden of Gethsemane and Socrates in his condemned cell. (The tradition was continued in subsequent centuries, by (among others) Diderot and Rousseau in the eighteenth and various writers in the nineteenth, all of them adjusting the parallelism to fit their particular religious preconceptions.) As in the ancient world, the figure of Socrates lent itself to appropriation by competing ideologies. For Montaigne in the sixteenth century Socrates was not a Christ-figure but a paradigm of natural virtue and wisdom, and the supernatural elements in the ancient portrayal, particularly the divine sign, were to be explained in naturalistic terms; the sign was perhaps a faculty of instinctive, unreasoned decision, facilitated by his settled habits of wisdom and virtue. The growth of a rationalizing approach to religion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which rejected revelation and the fanaticism consequent on disputes about its interpretation, allowed Socrates to be seen as a martyr for rational religion, who had met his death at the hands of fanatics. In this vein Voltaire wrote a play on the death of Socrates, and the Deist John Toland composed a liturgy for worship in a 'Socratic Sodality', including a litany in which, following the example of Erasmus, the name of Socrates was invoked.

As in the ancient world, there were dissenting voices. Some writers were critical of Socrates' morals, citing his homosexual tendencies and his neglect of his wife and children. For some, including Voltaire, the divine sign manifested a regrettable streak of superstition. The eighteenth century saw the appearance of the first modern works reviving the claim that the charges against Socrates were political and defending his condemnation on the basis of his hostility to Athenian democracy and his associations with Critias and Alcibiades. (That line

of interpretation continues up to the present, one example being I. F. Stone's widely read *The Trial of Socrates*.) And some writers of orthodox Christian views repudiated the parallels between Socrates and Jesus, alleging, in addition to the charges of superstition and immorality already mentioned, that Socrates had in effect committed suicide.

The pattern of appropriation to an alien culture has parallels in the treatment of Socrates in medieval Arabic literature. Apart from Plato and Aristotle, he is the philosopher most frequently referred to by Arabic writers, and the interest in him extended beyond philosophers to poets, theologians, mystics, and other scholars. This interest was not founded on extensive knowledge of the relevant Greek texts. While works dealing with Socrates' death, notably Plato's *Phaedo* and *Crito*, were clearly well known, there is little evidence of wider knowledge of the Platonic dialogues, and none of knowledge of other Socratic literature. There was, however, an extensive tradition of anecdotes recording sayings of Socrates, of the kind recorded in Diogenes Laertius and other biographical and moralizing writers. This tradition represents Socrates as a sage, one of the 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom' (i.e. sages), a moral paragon, an exemplar of all the virtues, and a fount of wisdom on every topic, including man, the world, time, and, above all, God. He is consistently presented as maintaining an elaborate monotheistic theology, neo-Platonist in its details, and his condemnation and death are attributed to his upholding faith in the one true God against the errors of idolators. This allows him to be seen as a forerunner of Islamic sages (as he was seen in the West as a proto-Christian), and to be described in terms which assimilate him to figures venerated in Islam, including Abraham, Jesus, and even the Prophet himself. Some writings represent him as an ascetic, and it is clear that he is conflated with the Cynics, above all with Diogenes, even to the extent of living in a tub and telling Alexander the Great to step out of the light when he was sunbathing. In other writings he is the father of alchemy, in others again a pioneer in logic, mathematics, and physics.

Again, as in the West, the generally honorific perception of Socrates was challenged on religious grounds by some orthodox believers (such as the eleventh/twelfth-century theologian al-Ghazali), who represented him as a father of heresies, a threat to Islam, and even as an atheist.[9]

The tradition of adapting the figure of Socrates to fit the general preconceptions of the writer is discernible in his treatment by three major philosophers of the nineteenth century, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, first delivered in 1805–6, Hegel sees the condemnation of Socrates as a tragic clash between two moral standpoints, each of which is justified, and thereby a necessary stage in the dialectical process by which the world-spirit realizes itself in its fullest development. Before Socrates the Athenians had spontaneously and unreflectively followed the dictates of objective morality (*Sittlichkeit*). By critically examining people's moral beliefs Socrates turns morality into something individual and reflective (*Moralität*); it is a requirement of this new morality that its principles stand the test of critical reflection on the part of the individual. Yet, since Socrates was unable to give any determinate account of the good, the effect of this critical reflection is merely to undermine the authority of *Sittlichkeit*. Critical reflection reveals that the exceptionless moral laws which *Sittlichkeit* had proclaimed have exceptions in fact, but the lack of a determinate criterion leaves the individual with no way of determining what is right in particular cases other than inward illumination or conscience, which in Socrates' case takes the form of his divine sign.

Socrates' appeal to his conscience is thus an appeal to an authority higher than that of the collective moral sense of the people, but that is an appeal which the people cannot allow:

> The spirit of this people in itself, its constitution, its whole life, rested, however, on a moral ground, on religion, and could not exist without

this absolutely secure basis. Thus because Socrates makes the truth rest on the judgement of inward consciousness, he enters upon a struggle with the Athenian people as to what is right and true. His accusation was therefore just.

(i. 426)[10]

The clash between individual conscience and the state was therefore *inevitable*, in that both necessarily claim supreme moral authority. It is also tragic, in that both sides are right:

In what is truly tragic there must be valid moral powers on both the sides which come into collision; this was so with Socrates. The one power is the divine right, the natural morality whose laws are identical with the will which dwells therein as in its own essence, freely and nobly; we may call it abstractly objective freedom. The other principle, on the contrary, is the right, as really divine, of consciousness or of subjective freedom: this is the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, i.e. of self-creative reason; and it is the universal principle for all successive times. It is these two principles which we see coming into opposition in the life and philosophy of Socrates.

(i. 446–7)

The situation is tragic in that both the collective morality of the people and the individual conscience make demands on the individual which are justified and ineluctable, but conflicting: the only resolution is the development of humanity to a stage in which these demands necessarily coincide. The individual nonconformist such as Socrates is defeated, but that defeat leads to the triumph of what that 'false individuality' imperfectly represented, the critical activity of the world-spirit:

The false form of individuality is taken away, and that, indeed, in a violent way, by punishment, but the principle itself will penetrate later, if in another form, and elevate itself into a form of the world-spirit. This

universal mode in which the principle comes forth and permeates the present is the true one; what was wrong was the fact that the principle came forth as the peculiar possession of one individual.

(i. 444)

It appears, then, that the condemnation of Socrates arises from the clash between the legitimate demands of collective (*Sittlichkeit*) and individual morality (*Moralität*), which in turn reflects a stage in human development in which the collective and the individual are separate and therefore potentially conflicting. This stage is to be superseded by a higher stage of development in which the individual and the collective are somehow identified, not by the subordination of one to the other, nor by the merging of the individual in the collective, but by the development of a higher form of individuality in which individuality is constituted by its role in the collective.

Kierkegaard discusses Socrates extensively in one of his earliest works, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates*. This was his MA thesis, submitted to the University of Copenhagen in 1841, shortly before the major crisis of his life, his breaking off his engagement to Regine Olsen. (The examiners' reports are preserved in the university records, giving an amusing picture of the problems of the academic mind confronted with wayward talent.) His treatment of Socrates is Hegelian: for him as for Hegel Socrates stands at a turning-point in world history, in which the world-spirit advances to a higher stage of development, and for him too that breakthrough demands the sacrifice of the individual. 'An individual may be world-historically justified and yet unauthorized. Insofar as he is the latter he must become a sacrifice; insofar as he is the former he must prevail, that is, he must prevail by becoming a sacrifice' (260).[11] For Kierkegaard as for Hegel the role of Socrates is to lead Greek morality to a higher stage of development; what is original in his treatment is his identification of irony as the means by which this transformation of morality was to be effected. Classical Hellenism had outlived itself, but before a new principle could

appear all the false preconceptions of outmoded morality had to be cleared away. That was Socrates' role, and irony was the weapon which he employed:

> [I]rony is the *glaive*, the two-edged sword, that he swung like an avenging angel over Greece ... [I]rony is the very incitement of subjectivity, and in Socrates this is truly a world-historical passion. In Socrates one process ends and with him a new one begins. He is the last classical figure, but he consumes this sterling quality and natural fullness of his in the divine service by which he destroys classicism.
>
> (211–12)

By irony Kierkegaard does not mean pretended ignorance or a pose of deference to others. 'Irony' is given a technical sense, taken over from Hegel, of 'infinite, absolute negativity'. What this amounts to is the supersession of the lower stage in a dialectical process in favour of the higher. Kierkegaard gives the example of the supersession of Judaism by Christianity, in which John the Baptist has an 'ironical' role comparable with that of Socrates: '[H]e [i.e. John] let Judaism continue to exist and at the same time developed the seeds of its own downfall within it' (268). But there was a crucial difference between Socrates and John, in that the latter lacked consciousness of his irony:

> [F]or the ironic formation to be perfectly developed, it is required that the subject also become conscious of his irony, feel negatively free as he passes judgment on the given actuality and enjoy this negative freedom.
>
> (ibid.)

This condition was fulfilled by Socrates, who was the first person to exhibit irony as 'a qualification of subjectivity':

> If irony is a qualification of subjectivity, it must exhibit itself the first time subjectivity makes its appearance in world history. Irony is,

> namely, the first and most abstract qualification of subjectivity. This points to the historical turning point where subjectivity made its appearance for the first time, and with this we come to Socrates.
>
> (281)

So Socrates' contribution to the development of morality is consciously to reject the authority of all previous moral norms and to be aware of his freedom. The pretended objective authority of these norms is superseded by their subjective acceptance by the individual. So, irony amounts not to moral nihilism, but to moral subjectivism. The connection with irony in the normal sense seems to be twofold: first, that the pretence of ignorance by Socrates was, in Kierkegaard's view, a tactic which he used in his destructive critique of conventional morality, and secondly, that the ironic individual no longer takes morality seriously. He cannot take conventional morality seriously because he has exploded its claims to objectivity. But he cannot take his self-adopted morality seriously either because he looks on it as a task which he has arbitrarily set himself, something perhaps like a hobby which one has just chosen to take up (235). Kierkegaard gives no indication of the answer to the question why the ironist should not simply give up morality altogether; he describes Socrates as arriving 'at the idea of the good, the beautiful, the true only as the boundary, that is com[ing] up to ideal infinity as possibility' (197), which seems to hint at some yet higher level in which moral subjectivism is itself superseded. A comparison earlier in the book (29) between the magnetic effect of Socrates on his acquaintances and Christ's imparting the Holy Spirit to his disciples may point towards the later works in which this higher level is found in the leap of faith, but in this work this remains the merest suggestion.

The suggestion is developed considerably in Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), where the traditional picture of Socrates as a forerunner of Christianity is given a characteristically idiosyncratic turn. The essence of Christianity is now seen as subjectivity. From the

objective standpoint of speculative philosophy Christianity is an absurdity, which can be embraced only by the criterionless leap of faith on the part of the individual, a leap which is not the acceptance of an abstract system of propositions, but a personal commitment to a way of life. This subjective commitment transcends objective knowledge, and is held by Kierkegaard to give access to a unique form of truth:

> *An objective uncertainty held fast in an approximation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth*, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual [Kierkegaard's emphasis] . . . [T]he above definition of truth is an equivalent expression for faith. Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent on holding fast the objective *uncertainty*, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith.
>
> (182)[12]

In his subjective adherence to morality Socrates came as near to this truth as was possible for a pagan:

> In the principle that subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, there is comprehended the Socratic wisdom, whose everlasting merit it was to have become aware of the essential significance of existence, of the fact that the knower is an existing individual. For this reason Socrates was in the truth by virtue of his ignorance, in the highest sense in which this was possible within paganism.
>
> (183)

Further, Kierkegaard is prepared to attribute to Socrates not only subjective commitment to morality, but also subjective faith in God, a

faith which foreshadows indeed the faith of the Christian, while lacking its deeply paradoxical character:

> When Socrates believed that there was a God, he held fast to the objective uncertainty with the whole passion of his inwardness, and it is precisely in this contradiction and in this risk, that faith is rooted. Now it is otherwise. Instead of the objective uncertainty, there is here a certainty, that objectively it is absurd; and this absurdity, held fast in the passion of inwardness, is faith. The Socratic ignorance is as a witty jest in comparison with the earnestness of facing the absurd; and the Socratic existential inwardness is as Greek light-mindedness in comparison with the grave strenuosity of faith.
>
> (188)

So Socrates combines subjective conviction in the existence of God with the view that objectively the truth of the matter is uncertain. To the extent that that position involves some intellectual discomfort it is a mere approximation to the genuine anguish of the Christian, whose commitment is to truths concerning which it is objectively certain that they are absurd.

For Nietzsche, Socrates was one of a number of figures, including also Christ and Wagner, for whom he had profoundly ambivalent feelings: as he said, 'Socrates is so close to me that I am nearly always fighting him.' This ambivalence finds expression in differences of tone, sometimes between different works, sometimes in the same work. His presentation of Socrates in his first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), illustrates this. The central thesis of this work is that Greek tragedy arose from the interaction of two opposed aspects of the creativity of the Greeks, which Nietzsche terms the Apollonian and the Dionysian. The Apollonian tendency, which has its purest expression in Homer, is characterized rather obscurely via an analogy with dreaming; it seems to amount to the presentation of an imaginary world, specifically the world of the Homeric gods, in a lucid and delightful

form. The Dionysian tendency, whose analogue is intoxication, is the tendency to give expression to ecstatic and excitable impulses, especially sexual impulses and impulses to violence. Religious festivals were the traditional occasions on which these impulses were allowed expression, and it was the unique achievement of the Greeks to develop a form of festival, the dramatic festival, in which the marriage of these two tendencies gave rise to an art form, tragedy, which combines Apollonian illusion and Dionysian excitement in a unique synthesis. The Apollonian element is associated particularly with the episodes of dialogue in Attic tragedy, and the Dionysian with the chorus, but we must not think of the synthesis as simple juxtaposition. Rather (though the obscurity of Nietzsche's writing renders interpretation hazardous), the basic idea is that the world of tragedy is at once as dark and terrible as the Dionysian forces and as lucid and, in a mysterious way, joyful as the sunlit world of the Homeric gods. 'So extraordinary is the power of the epic-Apollonian that before our eyes it transforms the most terrible things by the joy in mere appearance and in redemption through mere appearance' (12).[13]

This synthesis, achieved in the dramas of Aeschylus and Sophocles, disappears in the work of Euripides; Euripidean tragedy is a degenerate form, whose distinctive feature is a realistic depiction of character, closer to the world of New Comedy than to the terrifying yet ideal world of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Nietzsche's term for this is that Euripides

> brought the spectator onto the stage . . . Through him the everyday man forced his way from the spectators' seats onto the stage; the mirror in which formerly only grand and bold traits were represented now showed the painful fidelity that conscientiously reproduces even the botched outlines of nature.
>
> (11)

It is this which brings Socrates onto the scene, since Nietzsche, echoing

in his idiosyncratic fashion the ancient tradition that Socrates had collaborated with Euripides (DL, 2.18), sees him as a decisive influence in the degeneration of tragedy which he saw Euripides as having effected.

Once again, the precise form of this influence is not easy to recover from Nietzsche's prose. He speaks of Euripides as being only a mask through which speaks a new demonic power, neither Dionysus nor Apollo, but Socrates (*Birth of Tragedy* 12). The literal meaning hinted at appears to be this, that Euripidean realism is founded on psychological naturalism. Dramatic characters have to be shown acting on the same psychological principles which we use to explain the actions of actual people in everyday life. This is what Nietzsche calls '*aesthetic Socratism* [author's emphasis], whose supreme law reads roughly as follows "To be beautiful is to be intelligible" as the counterpart of the Socratic dictum "Knowledge is virtue"' (11). So 'Socratism' seems to be the name for a spirit of naturalistic rationalism, which seeks to tame the terrible forces so gloriously exhibited in Aeschylus and Sophocles by subjecting them to elucidation and criticism.

> Socratism condemns existing art as well as existing ethics. Wherever Socratism turns its searching eyes it sees lack of insight and the power of illusion; and from this lack it infers the essential perversity and reprehensibility of what exists. Basing himself on this point, Socrates conceives it to be his duty to correct existence: all alone, with an expression of irreverence and superiority, as the precursor of an altogether different culture, art and morality, he enters a world, to touch whose very hem would give us the greatest happiness.
>
> (13)

Aesthetic Socratism seems thus to be the extension to the realm of art of the intellectualism which the Platonic Socrates seeks to apply to conduct. For the Platonic Socrates virtue is knowledge and is sufficient for *eudaimonia*; so the good life is to be achieved through

understanding, and all wrongdoing is to be attributed to lack of understanding. Just as the Platonic Socrates gives no positive role to the non-rational elements in the personality, so Socratic art has no room for the mysterious, for what cannot be captured by theory. But it is precisely its resistance to theory which gives tragedy its power and profundity. It explores forces which transcend psychological understanding, and it exhibits dilemmas which it is beyond the power of moral theory to resolve. Socratism thus represents a profound impoverishment of the spirit, which Nietzsche calls (using the French term) *décadence.*

The use of this term brings out the ambivalence in Nietzsche's attitude to Socrates. *The Birth of Tragedy* is pervaded by a sense both of the superhuman quality of the individual person Socrates, 'the human being whom knowledge and reasons have liberated from the fear of death' (15), and of the transcending power of the spirit of enquiry which that person represents. The 'pleasure of Socratic insight' transforms one's whole attitude to the world:

> the Platonic Socrates will appear as the teacher of an altogether new form of 'Greek cheerfulness' and blissful affirmation of existence that seeks to discharge itself in actions-most often in maieutic and educational influences on noble youths, with a view to eventually producing a genius.
>
> (ibid.)

> [W]e cannot *fail* to see in Socrates the one turning point and vortex of so-called world history
>
> (ibid.)

since Socrates is the incarnation of the scientific spirit, which has led to the heights of modern scientific achievement, and without which humanity might not even have survived. But at the same time Nietzsche is convinced that this sense of Socratic optimism, this faith in

the power of the intellect to solve all problems of conduct and of nature, is not only a profound delusion, but also a symptom of degeneration. Later sections of *The Birth of Tragedy* express this strongly:

> From this intrinsically degenerate music [*namely, the New Attic Dithyramb, a musical form developed in the late fifth century* BC] the genuinely musical natures turned away with the same repugnance that they felt for the art-destroying tendency of Socrates. The unerring instinct of Aristophanes was surely right when it included Socrates himself, the tragedy of Euripides, and the music of the New Dithyrambic poets in the same feeling of hatred, recognizing in all three phenomena the signs of a degenerate culture.
>
> (17)

> One is chained by the Socratic love of knowledge and the delusion of being able thereby to heal the eternal wound of existence.
>
> (18)

Later in the same section he speaks of the modern world as entangled in the net of Alexandrian (i.e. uncreative and scholastic) culture, proposing as its ideal the theoretical man labouring in the service of science, whose archetype is Socrates, and of the fruit of Socratic culture as 'optimism, with its delusion of limitless power'. The 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism' added to the second edition of the work fourteen years later returns to this theme: '[T]hat of which tragedy died, the Socratism of morality, the dialectics, frugality and cheerfulness of the theoretical man . . . might not this very Socratism be a sign of decline, of weariness, of infection, of the anarchical dissolution of the instincts?' (1).

In later writings, particularly those written in 1888, shortly before his final mental collapse, the tone is harsher. Nietzsche now identifies himself with the Dionysian forces, and sees Socrates' rejection of them as in effect a personal rejection, to which he responds with extreme

emotional violence. In the section of *Ecce Homo* devoted to *The Birth of Tragedy* he says that that work's two decisive novelties are first, the understanding of the Dionysian phenomenon, now seen as 'the sole root of the whole of Hellenic art', and secondly, 'the understanding of Socratism: Socrates for the first time recognized as an agent of Hellenic disintegration, as a typical *décadent*'. 'I was the first to see', he continues,

> the real antithesis – the *degenerated* instinct which turns against life with subterranean vengeance. . . and a formula of *supreme affirmation* born out of fullness, of superfluity, an affirmation without reservation even of suffering, even of guilt . . . This ultimate, joyfullest, boundlessly exuberant Yes to life is not only the highest insight, it is also the *profoundest*, the insight most strictly confirmed and maintained by truth and knowledge . . . Recognition, affirmation of reality is for the strong man as great a necessity as is for the weak man, under the inspiration of weakness, cowardice and *flight* in the face of reality – the 'ideal' . . . They are not at liberty to know: *décadents need* the lie – it is one of the conditions of their existence – He who not only understands the word 'dionysian' but understands *himself* in the word 'dionysian' needs no refutation of Plato or of Christianity or of Schopenhauer – *he smells the decomposition.*
>
> (80)[14]

The language of sickness and decomposition takes up the theme of the essay on Socrates in *The Twilight of the Idols*, written earlier that year. Nietzsche begins with Socrates' last words, which he interprets as an expression of thanks for release from the sickness of life (see above). But the world-weariness which this expresses is itself the sickness from which Socrates suffers along with all so-called sages who theorize about morality and value.

> 'Here at any rate there must be something *sick*' – this is *our* retort: one ought to take a closer look at them, those wisest of every age! . . . Does

wisdom perhaps appear on earth as a raven which is inspired by the smell of carrion?

(39)[15]

Socrates and Plato are 'symptoms of decay . . . agents of the dissolution of Greece. . . pseudo-Greek . . . anti-Greek', in that their theorizing involves a negative attitude to life, in opposition to the triumphant affirmation of the Dionysian man with whom Nietzsche has identified himself.

But Nietzsche does not stop at the characterization of Socrates as a typical (perhaps the archetypal) *décadent*; in five astonishing sections (3–7) he mounts a ferocious attack on the individual personality of Socrates, in terms expressive of a loathsome snobbishness which even slips into anti-Semitism. Socrates belonged to the lowest social class: he was riff-raff. His ugliness was a symptom of a foul and dissolute temperament. Was he even a Greek at all? Dialectic is a malicious device by which the rabble defeat their betters, people of finer taste and better manners. It is a weapon of last resort in the hands of those who have no other defence. (That is why the Jews were dialecticians.) Socrates was a buffoon who got himself taken seriously.

Reading this stuff with hindsight, in the knowledge of Nietzsche's imminent breakdown, one is inclined to dismiss it as pathological raving. Yet this violence, pathological though it may be, is itself an expression of Nietzsche's deep ambivalence towards Socrates. In section 8 he says that what has gone before indicates the way in which Socrates could repel, which makes it all the more necessary to explain his fascination. So sections 3–7 present an adverse reaction to Socrates, leaving it ambiguous how far Nietzsche himself shares it. In some sense, no doubt, the reaction is his, but then so is what follows. The grotesque caricature of those sections is counterbalanced by a dignified portrait of Socrates as someone who attempted, misguidedly indeed, but seriously and with benevolent intent, to cure the ills of his

age by subjecting the dangerous Dionysian impulses to the control of reason. Nietzsche does not withdraw his negative evaluation; Socrates 'seemed to be a physician, a saviour', but his faith in rationality at any cost was error and self-deception: 'Socrates was a misunderstanding: *the entire morality of improvement, the Christian included, has been a misunderstanding.*' Yet the change of voice is most striking, and the return to the theme of Socrates' death in the final section has a genuinely elegiac tone:

> Did he himself grasp that [sc. *that so long as life is ascending, happiness and instinct are one*], this shrewdest of all self-deceivers? Did he at last say that to himself in the *wisdom* of his courage for death? . . . Socrates *wanted* to die – it was not Athens, it was *he* who handed himself the poison cup, who compelled Athens to hand him the poison cup . . . 'Socrates is no physician,' he said softly to himself: 'death alone is a physician here . . . Socrates himself has only been a long time sick . . .'.
>
> (44)

Even to the end, it appears, Nietzsche fought against Socrates because he was so close to him.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

Every age has to recreate its own Socrates. What is his significance for a post-Christian, post-idealist epoch for whom neither the figure of a precursor of Christ nor that of the embodiment of the world-spirit in its development of a higher form of consciousness has any meaning? One answer is to view his significance historically, as a pioneer of systematic ethical thought, as a central influence on Plato, as the focus of Socratic literature, and so on. But the historical importance of Socrates, unquestionable though it is, does not exhaust his significance, even for a secular, non-ideological age such as ours. As well as a historical person and a literary persona, Socrates is in many ways an exemplary figure, a figure which challenges, encourages, and inspires. To take the most obvious instance, Socrates still presents a challenge to those whose way into philosophy, and more generally into systematic critical thinking, is via the Socratic dialogues. Even in a world where the study of the ancient classics has lost its cultural pre-eminence, many find that those dialogues, whose comparative absence of technicality and conversational vividness draw the reader into his or her own dialogue with the text, provide the best introduction to philosophy. Again, virtually everyone whose business is teaching finds some affinity with the Socratic method of challenging the student to examine his or her beliefs, to revise them in the light of argument, and to arrive at answers through critical reflection on the information presented. But the critical method is no mere pedagogical strategy; it is, in real life as

much as in the Socratic dialogues, a method of self-criticism. The slogan 'The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being' (Pl. *Apol.* 38a) expresses a central human value, partly constitutive of integrity: namely, the willingness to rethink one's own assumptions, and thereby to reject the standing tendency to complacent dogmatism. *Carried to excess, self-examination can be paralyzing*, but Socrates stands as an example of a life in which it is a positive force on a heroic scale, since it produces the confidence to adhere, come what may, to those ideals which have withstood the test of self-criticism. As long as intellectual and moral integrity are human ideals, Socrates will be an appropriate exemplar of them.

References

1. *A History of Greek Philosophy*, iii (Cambridge, 1969), 372.
2. See Pl. *Gorg.* 473e, with commentary by E. R. Dodds, *Plato* Gorgias (Oxford, 1959), 247–8.
3. For details see J. Barnes, 'Editor's Notes', *Phronesis*, 32 (1987), 325–6.
4. For details see P. A. Vander Waerdt, 'Socratic Justice and Self-Sufficiency: The Story of the Delphic Oracle in Xenophon's *Apology of Socrates*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 11 (1993), 1–48.
5. For a useful summary of the evidence see C. H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (Cambridge, 1996), ch. 2.
6. I argue briefly for this general claim in *Plato*, Protagoras (2nd edn.; Oxford, 1991), pp. xiv–xvi, and more fully for specific instances of it in ch. 4 of this volume.
7. The objection is urged by G. Vlastos in 'Socrates on "The Parts of Virtue"', in his *Platonic Studies* (2nd edn.; Princeton, NJ, 1981).
8. The example is borrowed from T. C. Brickhouse and N. D. Smith, *Plato's Socrates* (New York and Oxford, 1994), 69–71.
9. For further information see I. Alon, *Socrates in Mediaeval Arabic Literature* (Leiden and Jerusalem, 1991).
10. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, tr. E. S. Haldane (London, 1982).
11. *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates*, tr. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Princeton, NJ, 1989).

12. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, tr. D. F. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton, NJ, 1941).
13. *The Birth of Tragedy*, tr. W. Kaufmann (New York, 1967).
14. *Ecce Homo*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, 1992).
15. *The Twilight of the Idols*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, 1990).

Further Reading

Ancient Sources

All the dialogues of Plato cited in this book are available in numerous English translations. The most accessible translation of the Socratic writings of Xenophon is that by H. Tredennick and R. Waterfield, *Xenophon, Conversations of Socrates* in Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, 1990), which has an excellent introduction and notes. The Socratic works are also available as part of the Loeb Classical Library edition of Xenophon (Greek with facing English translation), *Memorabilia* and *Oeconomicus* translated by E. C. Marchant (London and New York, 1923), *Symposium* and *Apology* translated by O. J. Todd (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1961). Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers* is also available in the Loeb edition (2 vols., tr. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, Mass., 1925)). Aristophanes' *Clouds* is translated by B. B. Rogers (London, 1916 (repr. 1924 as part of the complete Loeb edition of Aristophanes)) and by W. Arrowsmith (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1962). The edition of the play by K. J. Dover (Oxford, 1968, abridged edn., 1970) contains a comprehensive introduction which is very useful even to those who have no Greek.

Most of the fragments of the minor Socratic writers are available in Greek only; the standard edition is that by G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae*, 4 vols. (Naples, 1991). The principal fragments of Aeschines are translated in G. C. Field, *Plato and his Contemporaries* (London, 1930), ch. 11.

J. Ferguson, *Socrates, A Source Book* (London, 1970) contains a comprehensive collection of passages of ancient works (in English translation) referring to Socrates.

Modern Works

The modern literature on Socrates is vast. T. C. Brickhouse and N. D. Smith, *Socrates on Trial* (Oxford, 1989) contains a useful guide to it (pp. 272–316). This note restricts itself to major works in English.

Comprehensive Survey

Guthrie, W. K. C., *A History of Greek Philosophy*, iii, part 2 (Cambridge, 1969). Published separately 1971 under title *Socrates*.

Biography

Taylor, A. E., *Varia Socratica* (Oxford, 1911).

Critical and Analytical Works Concentrating on Plato's Presentation of Socrates

Brickhouse, T. C. and Smith, N. D., *Plato's Socrates* (New York and Oxford, 1994).

Irwin, T., *Plato's Ethics* (New York and Oxford, 1995), chs. 1–9.

Santas, G. X., *Socrates* (London, Boston, and Henley, 1979).

Vlastos, G., Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher (Cambridge, 1991).

——, *Socratic Studies* (ed. M. Burnyeat) (Cambridge, 1994).

Works on Socrates' Trial

Brickhouse, T. C. and Smith, N. D., *Socrates on Trial* (Oxford, 1989). A heavy work of scholarship.

Stone, I. F., *The Trial of Socrates* (London, 1988). A lively presentation, unreliable in places.

Collections of Articles

Benson, H. H. (ed.), *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates* (New York and Oxford, 1992).

Gower, B. S. and Stokes, M. C. (eds.), *Socratic Questions* (London and New York, 1992).

Prior, W. T. (ed.), *Socrates*, 4 vols. (London and New York, 1996). A comprehensive collection.

Vlastos, G. (ed.), *The Philosophy of Socrates* (Garden City, NY, 1971).

Works on Socratic Literature

Kahn, C. H., *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (Cambridge, 1996), chs. 1–4.

Rutherford, R. B., *The Art of Plato* (London, 1995).

Vander Waerdt, P. A., (ed.), *The Socratic Movement* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1994).

Socrates in Later Thought

Montuori, M., *Socrates: Physiology of a Myth* (Amsterdam, 1981).

Index of Ancient Works Cited

General Index

A

B

C

D

N

O

P

R

S

T

V

W

X

Z

第一章
绪 论

苏格拉底在哲学史上的位置独一无二。他是最具影响的哲学家之一，同时又是最神秘、最难了解的哲学家之一，而且，他的历史影响还与他的这种神秘性有关。首先，我们都知道，苏格拉底的人格对他同时代的人，尤其是对柏拉图，都产生了影响。可以毫不夸张地说，如果没有苏格拉底的言传身教，尤其是如果没有苏格拉底之死对柏拉图的影响，柏拉图大概就会成为一个政治家而不是一个哲学家，这样整个西方哲学的发展就会完全变样。作为一个哲学家的楷模，一个将道德与知识完全融入到日常生活中的楷模，一个面对唾弃和死刑表现出英雄般坚定的楷模，苏格拉底的形象一直影响着我们。为了回应时代的哲学变革，每个时代都要不断地强调苏格拉底作为哲学第一殉道者和守护神的形象。然而，苏格拉底的这个形象其实并不是由他本人创造的，而是由那些以他为写作题材的人创造的，尤其是柏拉图。柏拉图将苏格拉底描绘成理想化的哲学家，这个形象从古至今一直吸引和激励着世人。如果我们想试图透过柏拉图的生花妙笔来寻找历史上的苏格拉底，我们会发现，这就如同 19 世纪的《新约》研究企图寻找历史上的耶稣一样，最后其形象还是模糊不清。

苏格拉底的神秘性主要由两个原因造成（与耶稣的情形十

分相似)：首先是苏格拉底本人没有写下任何东西，其次是他死后很快就成了“苏格拉底对话”这种文学体裁的写作主题。他的那些亲朋好友，门生故旧依据各自的兴趣，发挥各自的想象力来呈现他的对话，以此来表现苏格拉底个性和对话的不同方面。柏拉图的对话录和色诺芬(Xenophon)的回忆录是这类体裁中保存得最为完整的作品，另外还有一些比较零碎的回忆录，特别是埃斯基涅斯(Aeschines)的那些回忆录，因为被后人引用而得以留存。我们下面将会详细讨论这些作品。这里应该强调的是，柏拉图、色诺芬和其他作家都是出于不同的目的来描绘他们心目中的苏格拉底，因此苏格拉底就有了不同的形象。可以说这些作家歪曲了苏格拉底的形象，他们往往创造出一个多变的苏格拉底形象，如理想化的哲学家或者是模范公民。“苏格拉底”只不过是用来称呼这个多变形象的一个代称罢了。柏拉图极力将苏格拉底描绘成一个理想化的哲学家。在我看来，柏拉图通过这种描绘把他自己不同阶段的哲学理论算在苏格拉底名下，其实他知道这些理论并不是苏格拉底的，而是他在他老师苏格拉底死后才提出来的。但是在柏拉图看来，苏格拉底就是理想化的哲学家的最好典范，因为他相信苏格拉底就是这样的一个人，苏格拉底经历的就是这样的生活。如果按照“小说”和“传记”的类别来划分，那么这些“苏格拉底对话”既不是小说作品，也不是传记作品。这些作品只是表达了作者们对于苏格拉底独特人格及其生活事件的不同反应和理解。为了更好地理解这些作品，我们必须进一步厘清有关苏格拉底生平性格的事实，至少是其中那些可信的部分。

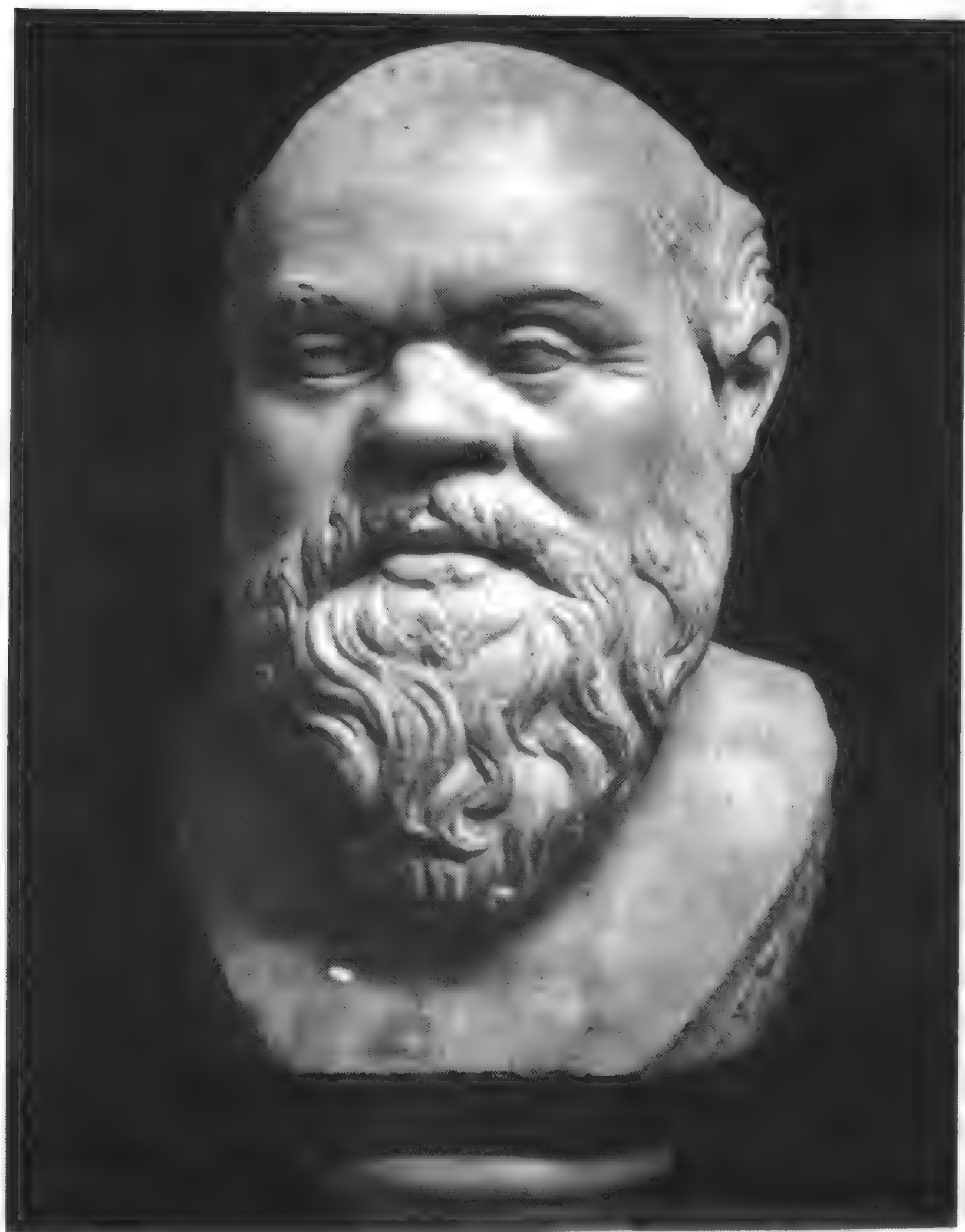


图 1. 苏格拉底半身像——雕刻于苏格拉底死后不久。这个半身像是罗马时代的复制品。

第二章

生平

苏格拉底去世的时间是能够确定的，因为有明文记载，他在公元前 399 年初春(雅典官历为 400 年或 399 年)被处以死刑，而关于他的确切出生日期还存在一些无关紧要的争议。公元前 2 世纪的编年史家阿波罗多罗斯（Apollodorus, 公元 3 世纪的传记作家第欧根尼 · 拉尔修 [Diogenes Laertius] 曾经引用过他的著作）很肯定地指出，苏格拉底出生在公元前 468 年的 5 月初（接近雅典官历的 469 年或 468 年），但在柏拉图的书中，苏格拉底有两次说到他被判死刑的时候正好是 70 岁[1]。要么是苏格拉底当时只有 69 岁，而柏拉图故意把他说成就快 70 岁了，要么是阿波罗多罗斯确定的出生日期（从 400 年或 399 年往回推 70 年算出来的）晚了一年或者两年（大多数学者也这样认为）。根据官方起诉书的记载（第欧根尼 · 拉尔修曾引用过），苏格拉底的父亲叫索福洛尼克斯 (Sophroniscus)，住在阿洛佩克（在雅典城的南面）。在《泰阿泰德篇》中（149a），柏拉图提到，苏格拉底的母亲叫菲娜丽特（Phainarete)，是个身材魁梧的接生婆。他母亲的名字（字面意思是“有启迪的品性”）和职业

[1] 见《申辩篇》17d 和《克力同篇》52e。

正好符合苏格拉底自愿承担的角色，即充当他人思想的助产士[1]。不过，这可能只是柏拉图的文学杜撰。据说苏格拉底的父亲是一位石匠，苏格拉底自己也曾做过一段时间的石匠。他还在重甲步兵团服过役，在那儿服役需要自带武器和盔甲，这说明苏格拉底的家境还不错。他苦行僧式的生活方式更多的是他哲学观点的体现，而不是说他真的很穷。他的妻子叫臧蒂普(Xanthippe)，色诺芬和其他人（柏拉图不在其中）都将他的妻子说成是个泼妇。他们有 3 个儿子，其中两个在苏格拉底死时都还很小。就算他妻子的脾气很坏，但这并没有影响到他们之间长久的婚姻关系。有一个不太可信的说法（而且还不合情理地说是来自亚里士多德），说苏格拉底还娶了第二个妻子，名字叫米尔托 (Myrto)。至于苏格拉底与米尔托的婚姻关系，有人说是在他与臧蒂普结婚之前，也有人说是在这之后，还有人说苏格拉底犯有重婚罪，因为他同时与这两个女人保持了婚姻关系。

人们对苏格拉底的前半生所知甚少。据说他当过雅典人阿基劳斯 (Archelaus) 的学生，而阿基劳斯又是阿那克萨戈拉 (Anaxagoras) 的学生。阿基劳斯的兴趣在自然哲学和伦理学（根据第欧根尼・拉尔修的记载，阿基劳斯提出热和冷是万物存在的两个根本原因，动物源自黏土似的物质，公正和不义不是自然的产物而是由习俗造成的，2.16）。在柏拉图所写的《斐多篇》（96a ff.）里，苏格拉底说他最初关注的是自然哲学，这可能反映了他当阿基劳斯学生的这段经历。如果是这样，他很快又将兴趣转向了其他领域，这也说明了阿基劳斯在伦理学方面并未对他产生任何影响。

公元前 432 年，伯罗奔尼撒战争爆发的时候，苏格拉底已

[1] 见《泰阿泰德篇》149-51。



图 2. 苏格拉底与他的"两个妻子"——这是 17 世纪荷兰画家 C.B. 埃弗丁恩（Everdingen, 1606-1678）带有喜剧风格的画作。在苏格拉底靠着的石头上刻有"认识你自己"这句箴言。在古希腊，这句箴言被当作是苏格拉底的一个口号，被铭刻在德尔菲的阿波罗神庙上。

经三十好几了，正是从这时起，他开始登上了历史的舞台。柏拉图几次提到苏格拉底从军的生平事迹[1]，如在开战初期，苏格拉底参加了北爱琴海的波提达依围攻战。在这些段落的最后，阿尔西比亚德斯 (Alcibiades) 详细描述了苏格拉底在战斗中是如何地勇敢，如何在赤脚单衫的情况下顽强地经受住了严冬的考验。阿尔西比亚德斯对于苏格拉底的描述之所以重要，是因为他为柏拉图所塑造的苏格拉底和公元前 5 世纪喜剧作品里所描绘的苏格拉底提供了非常可信的证据。第欧根尼·拉尔修曾经引用过喜剧作家阿美普萨斯 (Ameipsias) 的一些戏剧片段（许多学者认为，与阿里斯托芬 [Aristophanes] 公元前 423 年创作的《云》相比，阿美普萨斯已经失传的喜剧作品《科诺斯》应该更有价值），描述了苏格拉底身体的耐力，简朴的衣着，以及他赤脚刁难鞋匠的故事。在喜剧《云》中两次提到赤脚是苏格拉底的特征。另一位喜剧诗人欧波利斯 (Eupolis) 谈到苏格拉底时，说他是一个像乞丐一样的话匣子，往往下顿饭在哪里吃都不知道，还说他是一个小偷，这在阿里斯托芬的喜剧《云》中也有讽刺性的描写[2]。到公元前 420 年，苏格拉底已经很出名了，因为他古怪而简单的生活方式，也因为他的巧言善辩，他成了人们嘲笑的对象。他的个性特征成为了当时喜剧作品乐于采用的故事素材。但在喜剧作家眼里，苏格拉底的个性也代表了社会生活中一些重要但不受欢迎的倾向，所以他仅在阿里斯托芬的喜剧《云》中的戏剧形象得以流传。

格思里（W.K.C.Guthrie）对苏格拉底的戏剧形象做了一个很好的概括：

我们从喜剧《云》中能够看到苏格拉底是 3 种不同类型的人，这些类型在任何一个人的身上都不可能完美地结合起来：

[1] 见《申辩篇》28e,《卡尔米德篇》153a 和《会饮篇》219e ff.。

[2] 见《云》177—9。

首先，他是一个智者，讲授使人精明的技艺；其次，他是一个不敬神的自然哲学家，就像阿那克萨戈拉那样；再次，他是一个苦行僧式的道德教师，因无心俗务而衣衫褴褛，食不果腹。

在这部喜剧中，苏格拉底开办了一个学校，学生交了学费就可以向他学习赖掉欠债的诡辩术。这种诡辩术就叫做"用强词夺理来取胜"。智者普罗泰戈拉(Protagoras)提出过这个口号，意思是在两种对立观点的论战中，有理的传统道德观念（也就是代表着真理的一方）最后要输给无理的谬论（代表着歪理的一方）。喜剧《云》中的苏格拉底除了是传授这种诡辩术的老师，还是一个特别喜欢研究天体的自然哲学家。他拒绝了传统宗教及其对天体的神化，提出了他心目中的各种新神：如"空气神"、"以太神"、"星云神"、"混沌神"、"舌头神"以及取代宙斯而成为宇宙最高力量的"天界旋涡"。这种新"宗教"为智者派的非道德主义提供了形而上学的基础，因为与原有的诸神不同（就像苏格拉底所说，这些神不是"现在通用的钱币"，247-8)，新神无意惩罚那些作恶者。在该剧的结尾，苏格拉底的教学场所被烧毁，这是对发生于此的许多亵渎神灵的行为的惩罚，因为"弄清月亮的位置（观察月亮的轨道）"就是"冒犯诸神"(1506-9)。

到了公元前423年，苏格拉底已经很有名气。他被讽刺为是新学的代表人物。对于那些保守、有思想的雅典人来说，苏格拉底就是一个令人讨厌的危险分子，老是喜欢用科学思考和论辩训练去挑战传统的道德和宗教。当然，这种嘲讽并不意味着喜剧作家以及观众很了解苏格拉底或其他学者的生平和学说（虽然喜剧《云》中所嘲弄的学说和阿波罗尼亚的自然哲学家第欧根尼［Diogenes of Apollonia］的学说之间有许多相似之处，这给一些评论家留下了深刻的印象）。但喜剧作家和观众还是掌握了一些关于苏格拉底的真实情况（虽然有许多的夸张、简化、歪曲），对像普罗泰戈拉和第欧根尼这类"知识分子"的

目的也有所了解。我们必须要追问，苏格拉底在公元前423年之前究竟做了些什么，人们会对他有如此的讽刺和嘲弄。

按照阿里斯托芬的描写，苏格拉底创建了一所寄宿学校，向学生传授如何进行科学研究和运用论辩技巧，他甚至还通过传授这些知识来获取报酬。其实这些都是无稽之谈。柏拉图和色诺芬都反复强调，苏格拉底从没有声称自己懂专业的科学技术知识，或是为了钱才去教书[1]。在柏拉图眼里，职业智者只知积攒钱财，他们就像是“兜售灵魂的小贩”[2]，而苏格拉底则完全不同于智者，他为世人的幸福无私地献出自己的时间，结果自己却深陷贫困之中[3]。很难相信，如果柏拉图真的认为苏格拉底就是一个臭名昭著的知识贩子，他还会为苏格拉底作面面俱到的辩护，但我们却不难相信苏格拉底其实并不是喜剧作家丑化的那么一个人。所有关于苏格拉底的描绘都有一个共同点，那就是认为苏格拉底好质问他人，好与人辩论。他时常挑战那些自以为有所专长的人，并揭露他们思想中前后矛盾的地方。当然智者也做这样的事情，至少为了挣钱也在向人们传授辩论的技巧。苏格拉底却与众不同，他任何时候都穿着他那很显眼的破外套[4]，赤脚在街上大摇大摆地走着[5]，难怪人们会觉得“他就是一个古怪的家伙，跟每一个人辩论，找出别人的漏洞。他只是智者群体中的一员，这些智者常用一些诡辩式的论点向世人证明世界上本没有什么神灵，有的只是空气和旋转，太阳不过是一个烧红的石头，并不值得我们崇敬”。众人对苏格拉底的描绘中充斥着许多传闻，比如说苏格拉底早年对自然

1 见《申辩篇》19d-20c, 31b-c,《回忆苏格拉底》1.2.60,1.6.5和1.6.13。

2 见《美诺篇》91d和《大希比阿篇》282d-e。

3 见《申辩篇》31b-c。

4 见《普罗泰戈拉篇》335d,《回忆苏格拉底》1.6.2和第欧根尼·拉尔修2.28。

5 见《云》362, 柏拉图《会饮篇》221b。



图 3. 半圆形公共会场——雅典公民大会的会场。这是从天文台上看到的远景。

哲学有兴趣跟他的老师阿基劳斯有关，说苏格拉底不遵从当时的宗教观念。这些传闻都被喜剧天才阿里斯托芬在公元前 423 年搬上了戏剧舞台。

柏拉图提到苏格拉底的两次从军经历，一次是公元前 424 年参加发生在彼奥提亚的德里留战事[1]，另一次是参加公元前 422 年发生在北爱琴海沿岸的安菲波里之战[2]。在从德里留回撤途中，苏格拉底因为表现勇敢而成为传奇式的人物。后来一些作家说他在回撤时还救过色诺芬的命。当时色诺芬才 6 岁，这个故事显然是虚构的。此一虚构故事的始作俑者应该就是阿尔西比亚德斯。因为根据他的描述，苏格拉底在波提达依战役中

[1] 见《申辩篇》28e，《拉凯篇》181a 和《会饮篇》221a-b。

[2] 见《申辩篇》28e。

表现英勇，当他负伤时，苏格拉底还竭力相救[1]。在人们对苏格拉底的描绘中，几乎都肯定了苏格拉底十分勇敢，根本不在乎艰难困苦，而且酒量惊人[2]，有些描述还提到他的性情很暴躁，但是他能够用理智来控制自己的愤怒、节制自己的性欲[3]。色诺芬在他的《会饮篇》里给我们描绘了中年苏格拉底的外貌：鼻子扁平，鼻孔宽大，双目突出，嘴唇肥厚，大腹便便，这与阿尔西比亚德斯所描绘的苏格拉底形象很吻合。在柏拉图的《会饮篇》中，阿尔西比亚德斯将苏格拉底看作好色的男人或者像森林之神赛利纳斯(Silenus)一样[4]。在喜剧《云》中有两处附注146和223（即原稿上的旁注，大概写于古代晚期）说苏格拉底是秃顶，但这个说法并没有确实的根据。或许这源于人们常把苏格拉底看作是好色之徒，而好色之徒在他们看来都是光头秃顶。

苏格拉底从军中退役后的生活我们就一无所知了。直到公元前406年，因苏格拉底参与了一桩雅典公务，我们才又对他的生平有所了解。这桩公务是苏格拉底受审前涉足的唯一一次公务。那年雅典获得了一次海战的胜利，但由于指挥官们没有出手援救生还者，雅典公民大会投票认定这些指挥官应该受到集体的审判而不是按照法律只审判个别人。当时雅典的绝大多数官职的授与都是用抽签的方式决定。根据抽签结果，苏格拉底当选为元老委员会的成员，这个委员会的任务是为公民大会准备议事日程并主持会议。这次苏格拉底是委员会中唯一一个反对这个违法提案的人[5]，然而色诺芬在他的《回忆苏格拉底》

---

[1] 见《会饮篇》220d-e。

[2] 见《会饮篇》214a, 220a, 223c-d。

[3] 见西塞罗《图库兰谈话录》, 4.37.80, 比较柏拉图《卡尔米德篇》155c-e和《会饮篇》216d。相反的说法也有，如他的死对头阿里斯托依努斯（Aristoxenus）所描述的那样。

[4] 215b, 216d; 比较色诺芬《会饮篇》4.19。关于扁平的鼻子和突出的眼睛的描绘也见《泰阿泰德篇》143e。

[5] 有关的事件描述请见《申辩篇》32b-c和色诺芬的《希腊史》1.7.14-15。

中有不同的说法，且提到了两次，他说苏格拉底当时主持了公民大会的关键性辩论，并“不允许他们通过这个动议”（事实上这个动议最后公民大会通过了，我们只能这样理解：苏格拉底“试图反对通过，但他的反对没有起作用”）。

公元前404年，雅典民主政体被推翻，取而代之的是三十僭主。他们下令重新修订法律，很快便开始了恐怖统治，成千上万的人被杀害或是流放。这样的统治持续了8个月，直到三十僭主的暴政被武装抵抗运动所推翻，民主政体又得以复辟。苏格拉底在民主派和寡头派中都有朋友。三十僭主中最有名的卡尔米德(Charmides)和克里底亚(Critias)都是他的朋友（他们都是柏拉图的亲戚）。在推翻寡头政体的战斗中，他们都遭到了杀害。他在民主阵营的朋友包括演说家吕西亚斯（Lysias）和卡厄里芬(Chaerephon)，都曾遭流放，但一直积极参加反对寡头统治的斗争。在民主派的统治之下，苏格拉底对政治一向是不闻不问。他一直住在雅典。三十僭主当政时，曾想把苏格拉底也拖下水，让他也参与到逮捕一个叫利昂（Leon）的萨拉米斯人的行动，但苏格拉底拒绝与他们合作，“回家去了”[1]。当然，他在政治上并不反对三十僭主的统治，也不赞同民主派那种不合法和不道德的做法，正是因为这个原因，他才在审判海军指挥官的问题上坚持自己的立场。我们现在没有证据说明苏格拉底当时参与了推翻僭主统治的活动。柏拉图对此保持沉默，更重要的是色诺芬对此事也三缄其口，这表明了苏格拉底确实没有参与这些活动。

审判与死亡

大约在公元前400年或者399年初，一个名叫麦勒图

[1] 见《申辩篇》32d，比较《回忆苏格拉底》4.4.3。



图 4. 国王拱廊或者叫巴斯勒奥斯拱廊的废墟——这是负责宗教事务的执政官阿耳康国王（King Archon）的处所，苏格拉底就是在这里被控有不敬神之罪。

斯（Meletus）的默默无闻的年轻人[1]对苏格拉底提出了如下控告：

此控告由皮托斯区的麦勒图斯的儿子麦勒图斯提出，并发誓保证所控属实：阿洛佩克区的索福洛尼克斯的儿子苏格拉底是一个坏人，因为他拒绝承认雅典城邦所公认的诸神，并且引入了其他的新神。他还是一个腐化青年的罪人。对他的刑罚应该是死刑。

另外还有两位控告人：不出名的吕柯 (Lycon) 和在复辟的民主政府中赫赫有名的政治家阿利图斯 (Anytus)。在由负责宗教事务的执政官（大家都称他为“国王”）主持完预审之后（在柏拉图《游叙弗伦篇》的开头有提及），这个案子就在公元前

[1] 见《游叙弗伦篇》2b。

399年的初春交由500人组成的陪审团来进行最后的裁决。

关于这场审判的过程没有留下什么记录。在苏格拉底死后，有不少作者声称记录下了控方的控词和苏格拉底的辩词。由柏拉图和色诺芬所写的两篇苏格拉底的辩护词最后留存了下来，而控方的控词则已佚失。在控辩双方出示证据，作完陈述之后，由陪审团投票来裁定苏格拉底究竟是否有罪。根据柏拉图的《申辩篇》（36a），投票的结果是，认为有罪的是280票，认为无罪的是220票，前者比后者多了60票。一旦陪审团作出了有罪裁定之后，就要由控方和辩方分别提出他们所希望的刑罚，然后再由陪审团在两种刑罚中间作出选择。控方要求处以苏格拉底死刑，（按照柏拉图的说法）苏格拉底开始拒绝提出对他应该使用什么刑罚[1]，最后，在众人的劝说下，他提出一笔罚款，数额为半个塔兰特（古希腊货币单位），相当于一个熟练手工艺人8年的收入（38b）。陪审团投票的结果是判处苏格拉底死刑。按照第欧根尼·拉尔修的记载，最后主张死刑的人比开始主张有罪的人又多了80人，即有360人主张死刑，只有140人不主张死刑。显然，苏格拉底拒绝接受刑罚使原来认为他无罪的一些陪审团成员对他产生了反感。

通常宣判之后马上就要执行判决。可是这次审判时正好赶上要派人去神圣的德洛斯岛举行每年的祭祀活动，为了保证仪式的纯洁性，规定在这个时间不能处决犯人[2]。因此在宣判和执行之间还有一个月的间隔。苏格拉底在这个期间被关在监狱里面，他的朋友可以来探监[3]。柏拉图在《克力同篇》表示，苏格拉底有机会越狱逃脱，大概城邦当局也默许，因为处死这

---

[1] 见《申辩篇》36d-e，他建议的刑罚是宣布他是公众的恩人，因此他今后可在市政厅免费享受一日三餐。

[2] 见《斐多篇》58a-c。

[3] 见《克力同篇》43a。

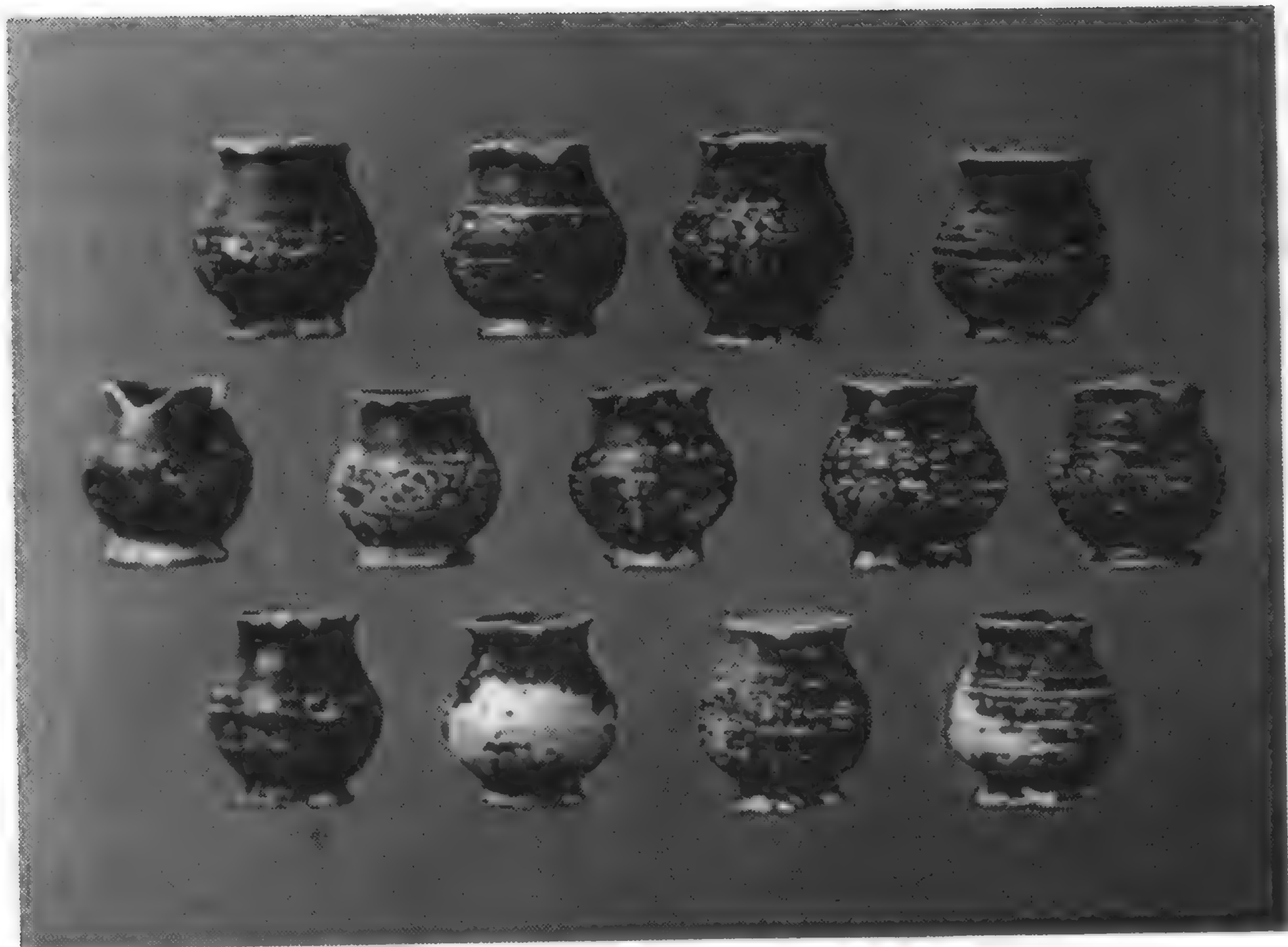


图 5. 被认为是装有用于处决犯人的毒药的小罐，发现于雅典监狱的水池里。

样一个著名人物会让他们很难堪（45e，52c）。虽然有越狱的机会，但苏格拉底还是拒绝逃跑，决定坦然赴死。柏拉图在《斐多篇》里带有理想化色彩的描写，使苏格拉底之死名垂千古。执行死刑的方式是让犯人自己喝下从毒芹属植物提炼出来的毒酒，尽管这种刑罚没有通常的酷刑那么可怕，但是医学上证明，这种毒酒喝下去之后还是很令人痛苦的，苏格拉底不可能像柏拉图描写的那样，死得很平静，很有尊严。依照柏拉图的描写，苏格拉底最后说的话是“克力同，我们还欠阿斯克勒庇俄斯(Asclepius) 一只鸡，记住要还清这笔债务”[1]。阿斯克勒庇俄斯是药神，有病的人只要向他献上一只公鸡作为感恩的供品，身体就能得到康复。如果这确是他的临终遗言，那么有趣的是他

[1] 见《斐多篇》118a。

最后关心的还是与宗教仪式有关的事情。（这个情形让 18 和 19 世纪苏格拉底的理性主义崇拜者们有点尴尬。）柏拉图的描述过于理想化，因而我们有理由怀疑，他对苏格拉底遗言的描写更多的是出于戏剧夸张而非历史真实的考虑。假定这个遗言最终表现了苏格拉底的虔诚，那么色诺芬的描写应该比柏拉图的更符合实情一些。近来有一个很巧妙的观点认为，根据《斐多篇》陈述的一些细节可以判断 (59b)，苏格拉底喝下毒酒的时候，柏拉图因为生病并没有在场。向药神献上公鸡，是因为柏拉图身体康复而要表示感谢，同时也标志着他是苏格拉底哲学的继承人。这种自我吹捧似乎不太可信。以前还有一种观点（如尼采的观点）认为，向阿斯克勒庇俄斯献祭，表达了苏格拉底本人对摆脱生命疾苦的感激之情（参见莎士比亚剧作中的台词“在生命的阵阵兴奋之后，他终于睡着了”），这种看法似乎更有道理。

由于这次审判没有留下任何记录，我们无法准确地再现控方对苏格拉底的指控。上面提到的那些指控含糊不清，许多的行为都可算在其中，而且雅典的法律诉讼程序是禁止提出那些与指控书内容无关的材料，因为这些材料可能直接影响到陪审团最后的裁决。一种古老的观点认为，苏格拉底被定罪的真实原因是政治方面的，因为据说受他影响的朋友都是一些以反雅典城邦和反民主政体而知名的人物，尤其是阿尔西比亚德斯和克里底亚。演说家埃斯基涅斯 (Aeschines) 直截了当地宣称“你们这些雅典人杀害了智者苏格拉底，不就是因为你们认为他曾经教过克里底亚，而克里底亚又是推翻了民主政体的三十僭主之一”[1]。考虑到阿尔西比亚德斯、克里底亚、卡尔米德这些人都声名狼藉，再加上苏格拉底其他两个知名的朋友费德鲁斯

[1] 《反对提玛科斯》，发表于公元前 345 年；也可比较《回忆苏格拉底》1.2.12-16。



图 6. 苏格拉底之死。《克力同为已经死去的苏格拉底合上眼睛》，意大利雕塑家安东尼奥 · 卡诺瓦（Antonio Canova）的作品（创作于 1787 至 1792 年间）。

（Phaedrus）和厄里西马楚斯（Eryximachus）（还有苏格拉底圈子里的其他人）又曾卷入公元前415年发生的一起广为人知的诋毁宗教的事件，这就难怪有人要利用上述人等的种种劣行来控告苏格拉底腐化青年。公元前403年曾经通过一个大赦令，使人们可以免于因过去所犯的罪行受到指控，但是并不排除可以用这些犯罪前科来说明被告的品行。至少从指控苏格拉底腐化青年来看，肯定有政治方面的原因。但是我们也不能由此得出结论说，宗教上的指控只是为了掩盖纯粹政治上的指控，或者说所谓的腐化青年与宗教和政治问题都不相干。我们在阿里斯托芬的喜剧《云》（420s）中看到，苏格拉底被描写成一个传统宗教的颠覆者，他用自己的“新神”，如“空气神”和“旋涡神”来代替传统的诸神。除此之外，他还是一个传统道德和正统教育的破坏者。在《申辩篇》中，柏拉图认为，某些对苏格拉底的污蔑之词到公元前399年还在四处流传。我相信柏拉图所言属实。尽管公元前5世纪对普罗泰戈拉和欧里庇得斯[1]这些自由知识分子的一系列指控完全是不可信的，但是阿那克萨戈拉还是被迫离开了雅典，因为他害怕会因为自己曾大不敬地宣称太阳不过是一块烧红的石头而受到指控。柏拉图在《申辩篇》中（27d-e）很注意将苏格拉底和阿那克萨戈拉区别开来，这表明他知道，苏格拉底也可能遭受类似的指控。

当然也有证据表明，在当时的人看来，苏格拉底个人的宗教行为和宗教态度均很古怪。他公开宣称他听从一种隐秘的神示，这是一种内心的声音，这种声音会警告他不要去做有害于自己的事情，比如去从事政治。苏格拉底在《申辩篇》里说，麦勒图斯在控告中歪曲了他的主张。苏格拉底的这种说法也没

[1] 欧里庇得斯（Euripides，约公元前485—406），古希腊三大悲剧作家之一，相传创作了90余部悲剧作品，现存《特洛亚妇女》、《希波吕托斯》和《美狄亚》等9部。—— 译注

有什么明显违法或是不敬神的地方，但是联系到他那些不守成规的行为，我们就可以相信游叙弗伦（Euthyphro）在对话中所言不差，苏格拉底没有依照通常的途径与神沟通[1]。事实上，雅典城邦从公元前4世纪就能够接受外来的新神，比如狩猎女神本狄斯神(Bendis)和药神阿斯克勒庇俄斯被正式地供奉起来，但个人迷信还是被视为危险的举动，而且要以死刑加以惩处。当苏格拉底被看作是个人迷信的带头人时，人们的这种偏见就会给他带来伤害，这在一些文献中有所暗示。在喜剧《云》中，在描写苏格拉底引荐斯特里普斯亚德斯(Strepsiades)到他的“思想学校”时，阿里斯托芬模仿了一种神秘宗教的入教仪式，这明显是对苏格拉底的一种嘲讽（250-74）。而在阿里斯托芬的另一部喜剧《鸟》（创作于公元前414年）的一段合唱中提到，苏格拉底在一个神秘的湖畔招魂唤鬼，而他的朋友卡厄里芬（Chaerephon，在喜剧《云》中是苏格拉底的学生之一）“这只蝙蝠”就是他招唤出来的鬼魂之一（1553-64）。人们还认为，苏格拉底还带领一帮人，搞神秘学研究，有一次在波提达依，他陷入迷狂的状态，纹丝不动地站在一个地方，冥思苦想了一整天[2]，这些都是指摘他行为怪异的依据。我们看到，苏格拉底既是一个不敬神的自然哲学家，同时又是一个装神弄鬼的苦行者，他的这两种形象似乎彼此不太吻合。但这种形象上的矛盾在公元前5世纪还不是很明显。无论如何，我们这里关注的是当时的思想风气，而不是那些听上去振振有词的罪状。我认为，在古希腊人看来，苏格拉底是宗教的离经叛道者和传统道德的颠覆者，他密友一些骇人听闻的罪行已经充分地显示了他对年轻人的负面影响。

关于控告苏格拉底的理由就说到这里。至于苏格拉底的辩词，一直有人说（最早可以追溯到公元前4世纪）苏格拉底并

[1] 见《游叙弗伦篇》3b, 比较色诺芬《回忆苏格拉底》1.1.2。

[2] 见《会饮篇》220c-d。

没有提供什么证据来反驳控方，但许多事实表明，苏格拉底确实进行了申辩，只是苏格拉底的申辩太与众不同，以至于人们认为他事先根本就没有打算要进行申辩，或者说他不是当真希望可以使陪审团相信他是无罪的[1]。（西塞罗 [Cicero,《演说集》，1.231] 还有其他人都曾描述说吕西亚斯为苏格拉底写了一份申辩词，但没有料到，苏格拉底拒绝在法庭上宣读。这个故事很可能只说明苏格拉底的申辩词只是吕西亚斯写的许多篇演说稿中的一篇。见普卢塔克 [Plutarch][2] 写的《吕西亚斯传》，863b。）我们自然要问，由柏拉图和色诺芬写的两个不同版本的《申辩篇》究竟在多大程度上真实反映了苏格拉底申辩词的基本内容。这两部作品在性质上迥然不同。柏拉图的《申辩篇》要比色诺芬的版本长 4 倍，声称是一字不差地记录了苏格拉底发表的 3 篇申辩词，第一篇是对他控罪所作的辩护，第二篇是他被定罪之后对刑罚问题所作的申诉，第三篇是在陪审团投票判他死刑之后，他对陪审团发表的演说。色诺芬的《申辩篇》是一部叙事性的作品，它首先解释了苏格拉底为什么事先没有打算进行申辩，接着从苏格拉底的主要申辩发言及其向陪审团所作的最后陈述中摘录了一些内容（用直接引语叙述），最后对苏格拉底在审判之后讲的一些话进行了记录和汇编。这两部作品在内容上也有许多不同之处。尽管它们都反映了苏格拉底对他 3 条罪状所作的申辩，但是在申辩的内容上有很大的出入。色诺芬描写的苏格拉底驳斥了对他不信城邦诸神的指控，他认为自己一直积极参加城邦公共的敬神活动；至于指控他引入了新神，苏格拉底认为，这仅仅是因为他得到了神示。在他看来，

[1] 色诺芬《申辩篇》1-8。

[2] 普鲁塔克（Plutarch，大约生活在公元46—120），古希腊传记作家和散文家，创作了大约200多部作品，比较有名的是《希腊罗马名人传》以及《道德论丛》。——译注

传统宗教也经常依赖于神示和神谕。他还驳斥了说他腐化青年的指控。他强调，对于传统美德，他一向是身体力行，这是众所周知的。另外，他还声称，人们真正不满的其实是他对青年的教育，但他认为，这种教育对青年是有百利而无一害的。苏格拉底说话的口气中规中矩，不敢越雷池半步，以至于读者可能都会觉得奇怪，人们为什么会告他。

相反，柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底一开始就表示，现在对他的指控是对他长期误解的结果。这种误解最早要追溯到阿里斯托芬对他的讽刺挖苦，其中有许多不实之词，最主要是两条：一是说他自称是自然哲学的权威，另一个说他是为了钱才去教书的（在反驳第二个谎言的过程中，柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底否认他教过任何人，这与色诺芬笔下的不同）。苏格拉底认为，人们之所以对他的行为有所曲解，是因为他声称具有某种智慧。正是对这种智慧的解释使得柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底远在色诺芬笔下的苏格拉底之上，因为前者的解释相当于是一篇自辩词，他把自己的生活方式看作是一种神圣的使命，和世俗成规迥然有别。

按照柏拉图的说法，这个使命的渊源起于苏格拉底的朋友卡厄里芬到德尔斐的阿波罗神庙去求神谕。卡厄里芬问神灵还有没有比苏格拉底更有智慧的人，神谕上说没有了。因为苏格拉底知道他并不具有什么专长，他对神谕的内容感到有些迷惑，就在那些公认的权威中间去寻找比他更有智慧的人（他首先找了政治家，随后又找了诗人和手艺人）。通过对他们专业知识的询问，苏格拉底发现这些权威实际上不具有他们自己宣称的那种智慧，反而是他自己更有智慧，因为他至少知道自己的无知。于是，他明白了，神谕之所以说他有智慧正是因为他意识到了自己的无知，所以他的神圣使命就是告诉其他人，他们所谓的智慧只是徒有虚名而已。正是履行了这种质问他人的使命（通常就是指“苏格拉底的反诘法”，“反诘”这个词的希腊原

文 *elenchos*，就是“审视”、“质问”的意思）使得他不受欢迎，旁人对他也产生了误解。他在申辩中强调这种使命会给城邦带来最大的利益，他有义务严格按神的旨意执行这种使命，即使失去生命，也在所不惜。

这段叙述存在很多问题，首先，最明显的就是神谕的真实性。这段叙述有依据吗？或者按一些学者的观点，这仅仅是柏拉图的杜撰？没有关于德尔斐神谕的正式记载来帮助我们确证这段叙述的真实性。我们所知道的大多数有关神谕上的回答都出自文学作品，其真实性都有待一一考证。事实上，色诺芬也提到了这个神谕，但这也不算是一条独立证据，因为他在写作时就已知道柏拉图对此事的记载，因此他对这个神谕的叙述多半来自柏拉图。我们很难去考证这个神谕的真实性，但我个人还是倾向于认可。如果它是假的，那为什么柏拉图要点明是卡厄里芬去求神谕而不是说是“某个人”去求神谕？为什么他还要补充一个旁证说，尽管卡里芬在苏格拉底受审时已经去世，但他的兄弟还健在，可以证明这段叙述的真实性？这段叙述在柏拉图和色诺芬笔下起了不同的作用，这比其历史真实性更为重要。按照色诺芬的说法，神谕上说的是，再没有人比苏格拉底更具有自由的精神，更公正，更有自制力，后又引用了一些事例来证明上述这些美德，而对于他的智慧就提得很少。按照柏拉图的记述，神谕上说的是再没有人比苏格拉底更有智慧了，而苏格拉底的智慧就是自我认识。色诺芬意在利用这段叙述凸显苏格拉底身上的传统美德，而柏拉图则是要说明，苏格拉底的反诘是在履行一项神圣的使命，是一种最虔诚的行为。

柏拉图关于神谕的叙述还有一个最明显的特征。在他笔下，苏格拉底不再追寻神谕的意义，转而通过不断盘问雅典公民来关切他们的灵魂，以此作为他终生的志业。《申辩篇》23a 有一段对神谕意义的阐释：“事实上神（只有神）才是智慧的，人的智慧不重要，甚至毫无价值……人哪，苏格拉底才是你们中

间最有智慧的人，因为他知道事实上他并没有什么智慧”。这个发现并没有让苏格拉底停止探求，反而使他继续追问：“正因为这个原因，我才遵照神的旨意四处奔波去寻找我认为是有智慧的每一个人，不管他是雅典公民还是外邦人；当我发现他并没有什么智慧的时候，我就要代神向他指出，他不是一个有智慧的人”。为什么苏格拉底要“代神”向人们指出，他们自夸的智慧是毫无根据的呢？神要求他去告知人们，只有神才拥有真正的智慧，人没有真正的智慧，这是为什么呢？传统的观点认为，人应该有自知之明，应该承认自己比不上神；对于那些试图要僭越此一神人差距的人，都要受到神严厉的惩罚，比如阿波罗神曾经痛斥好色之徒玛息阿（Marsyas），因其要与他在音乐上比个高低。然而，人们从苏格拉底的质问所得到的益处并不是那种表面上的东西。苏格拉底的质问是要人们“关注智识、真理、和灵魂的最佳状态”（29e），因为“正是因为德性，财富和其他东西才可能在公私两方面都对人有益”（30b）。自我认识和灵魂向善之间有着密切的关系；或者说自我认识就等同于灵魂向善，是灵魂向善的必要或充分条件，或者就是充要条件。这就是为什么说苏格拉底为神效劳能够给城邦带来最大的好处。

自我认识和灵魂向善之间的具体关系在《申辩篇》里并没有讲得很清楚。清楚的是，柏拉图把知识和德性的关系作为许多苏格拉底对话的主题。按《申辩篇》里的描述，这也是苏格拉底用来反驳说他不敬城邦诸神的要点所在。与色诺芬不同，柏拉图并没有提及苏格拉底在公开或私下场合是否遵行了传统的宗教礼仪。他是把苏格拉底的哲学生活方式视作更加高级的宗教实践，即服从一位要我们完善自己灵魂的神。色诺芬和柏拉图都按照自己的方式来编排苏格拉底对指控的回答，色诺芬强调苏格拉底身上十分传统的虔诚和德性，柏拉图则将苏格拉底描绘成履行哲学生活方式的楷模。

柏拉图笔下苏格拉底对指控的回答显示出苏格拉底质问的

力量。当麦勒图斯指控苏格拉底引入新神，苏格拉底就通过盘问使麦勒图斯承认自己的立场是前后矛盾的，因为麦勒图斯既坚持说苏格拉底引入了新神，同时又说苏格拉底不承认神的存在。至于指控他腐化青年，苏格拉底就反驳说，如果他腐化了他们，那他也不是存心的，因为他要是腐化了青年，他们便会加害于他，而事实上没有任何人这么做过。苏格拉底的后一个论点对他在柏拉图其他几段对话中提出的伦理命题至关重要。我们看到，柏拉图所设计的苏格拉底对指控的反驳，不仅依赖于苏格拉底的辩论技巧，而且还借助于苏格拉底的伦理学说。在柏拉图看来，对苏格拉底的指控并不是一种人身攻击，更重要的是一种对苏格拉底哲学实践的攻击，要对这种攻击进行反驳，就要指出苏格拉底其实是在为神效劳，而且还要充分利用苏格拉底的论辩技巧及其思想学说。与柏拉图不同，在色诺芬笔下，苏格拉底的反驳就没有什么哲学内容。

要想通过把色诺芬和柏拉图的描写结合起来，做到真实地重现苏格拉底受审时的自我辩护，其结果必然是徒劳无功的，因为他们二人都是按自己的思路来编写苏格拉底的申辩内容。我认为，不可能弄清苏格拉底是否真的作过按柏拉图或色诺芬记述的那些陈述或申辩。从一个更广阔的视角来看，我认为，与色诺芬的记述相比，柏拉图的记述更能抓住当时审判的气氛，更能体现苏格拉底申辩的真实内容。原因有二。首先，与色诺芬的记述比较，柏拉图强调了阿里斯托芬对苏格拉底的嘲讽及其影响（色诺芬完全没有提到这个方面），这就把对苏格拉底的指控置于相关的历史背景之下，也使对苏格拉底不敬城邦诸神和引入新神的指控听起来更可信。其次，苏格拉底的申辩与众不同，色诺芬对此的描述却枯燥乏味；而柏拉图却生动有趣地记述了苏格拉底视其反诘为敬神利邦之举的事情。最具有讽刺意味的是，很多作家都指责苏格拉底傲慢自大，柏拉图本想替苏格拉底辩解，但在他笔下，苏格拉底在宣称其反诘是敬神利邦之举时比在反驳对他的指控时表现得更为傲慢自大。

第三章

苏格拉底文献和苏格拉底问题

上一章对苏格拉底的生平及其死亡原因的介绍，已使我们不得不面对所谓的“苏格拉底问题”，即如何通过文献去了解历史上真实的苏格拉底的生平和性格。上一章的每一论断，或明或暗地都包含了一些对其所依据文献的性质和可靠性的假设。上一章还特别强调，柏拉图和色诺芬是站在不同的立场上来构想苏格拉底的申辩；最后结尾时说道，除了勉强能确定个别攻击苏格拉底的词句外，我们手头的文献只能让我们知道苏格拉底申辩过程的大概，对其详情，我们仍一无所知。本章的任务是概述那些流传至今的、涉及苏格拉底的各种古代文献及其所属体裁，希望以此来弄清造成这一结果的来龙去脉。

柏拉图之外的其他描述者

对于第一类苏格拉底文献，主要是公元前 5 世纪出现的那些描写苏格拉底的喜剧，此处我并没有什么要补充的。这些喜剧是唯一在苏格拉底去世前就已完成的苏格拉底文献，所以这部分文献不可能受到柏拉图的影响。这类喜剧表现了时人对苏格拉底的讽刺和挖苦，并且将他与当时知识分子生活的重要方面联系起来。我们有理由相信，在很大程度上，正是这种讽刺

挖苦导致了人们对苏格拉底的怀疑和敌视，并最终造成了他的死亡。

亚里士多德在《诗论》的开头就提到，“苏格拉底对话”与公元前 5 世纪西西里的两位剧作家索夫龙 (Sophron) 和克塞那库斯 (Xenarchus) 的滑稽剧属于同一表现体裁（他们显然是一对父子），但他还没有找到一个名字来给这种体裁命名。“滑稽剧”是对日常生活场景的戏剧化摹仿（有些剧作的名字就叫“岳母”或是“金枪鱼与渔夫”），这些“滑稽剧”都是虚构的，从表面上看，还都带有喜剧色彩，剧中的男女人物都代表着某类人。并没有证据表明，剧中描绘的人物就是真实的历史人物。虽然亚里士多德把这类滑稽剧与苏格拉底的对话视为同一种艺术体裁，而且据说柏拉图曾经还把这类滑稽剧介绍给雅典人，他的人物描写也受其影响，但我们不能夸大两者的相似之处，因为这种相似仅在于都是用散文体的对话来（粗略地）描写时下的生活。我们也不能贸然地下结论说，因为滑稽剧完全是虚构的，而苏格拉底的对话跟滑稽剧属于同一艺术体裁，所以苏格拉底的对话也完全是虚构的。至少有一点不是完全虚构的，这就是对话所描写的人物来自现实生活。至于说到人物描写的虚构程度，那就是另外一个问题了。

至于说是谁率先用“苏格拉底对话”这一体裁写作，不同的古代文献看法不同，但。没有证据显示，这类作品是苏格拉底生前就创作出来的，但完全有理由认为，其作者都有着同样的意图（色诺芬对此直言不讳），那就是为了纪念苏格拉底，为了替苏格拉底辩护，认此来批驳对苏格拉底的指控和审判，反驳那些诽谤苏格拉底的传闻（比如大约在公元前 394 年之后的某个时候，就有一个叫波吕克拉特斯［Polycrates］的演说家写了一本名为《苏格拉底罪名》的小册子来诽谤苏格拉底，这本小册子现已失传）。根据狄奥根尼 · 拉尔修的记载，苏格拉

底的一些朋友记录了他的对话，我们没有理由不相信拉尔修，但正像我们不要认定"苏格拉底对话"完全是虚构的一样，我们也必须避免走向另一个极端，认为这些朋友的作品就是苏格拉底对话的真实记录。这种记录的作用不是为以后的公开出版提供一字不差的信息，而是保留一些有关苏格拉底的真实材料，为描写苏格拉底提供更为丰富的想象空间。

除了柏拉图和色诺芬的作品之外，大多文献都已失传。对于其他大多数作家我们最多只知道一些书名和文字片断。从一些书名上看，它们之间在主题上是互相关联的，其中也包括了与柏拉图对话的关联。据说，克力同曾经写过一本《普罗泰戈拉》和一篇苏格拉底的申辩词；埃斯基涅斯，安提西尼(Antisthenes)，欧克莱德斯(Eucleides)以及斐多（Phaedo）都写过名为《阿尔西比亚德斯》的著作；埃斯基涅斯和安提西尼各自都写过名为《阿斯帕希娅》的书（阿斯帕希娅［Aspasia］是著名政治家伯里克利［Pericles］的情妇，也是柏拉图写作《美诺篇》的灵感来源）；安提西尼也写过《梅内克塞诺篇》。特别引起我们注意的是一份保留在莎草纸上的匿名古代残篇（现收藏在德国科隆），其中记录了苏格拉底在被判处死刑之后与一个未披露姓名者在牢房里的对话（这使我们想起柏拉图的《克力同篇》），这个人问苏格拉底为什么他在受审时不为自己辩护。像在《普罗泰戈拉篇》中一样，苏格拉底回答说，快乐是生命的最高目标，这个观点为苏格拉底的朋友、昔兰尼学派的创始人亚里斯提卜(Aristippuss)所采纳（他也写过一个苏格拉底的对话）。有可能这篇匿名作品的作者也属于昔兰尼学派成员。另一个与柏拉图的《普罗泰戈拉篇》有关联的文献是埃斯基涅斯所写的《卡里亚斯》（卡里亚斯［Callias］的家正是柏拉图对话和色诺芬《会饮篇》中故事发生的背景）。除了《阿尔西比亚德斯》外，麦加拉的欧克莱德斯（Eucleides of Megara）还写有《埃斯基涅斯》，《克力同》和《爱欲篇》（爱欲是典型的



图 7. 苏格拉底训斥阿尔西比亚德斯的场景（意大利画派作品，约 1780 年）

苏格拉底对话的主题，在柏拉图的《斐德罗篇》和《会饮篇》以及埃斯基涅斯的《阿尔西比亚得斯》中也有论述）。阿尔西比亚德斯的名字在这些文献中频繁出现，这绝非偶然。我们在上一章已经看到，正因为苏格拉底与阿尔西比亚德斯过从甚密，人们才控告苏格拉底腐化青年，而且在他死后，人们还以此事来诋毁他的名声；按照色诺芬的说法[1]，“控告人（也许是波吕克拉特斯）说，克里底亚和阿尔西比亚德斯是苏格拉底的朋友，他们二人给城邦带来了最严重的危害。克里底亚是寡头统治集团中最贪婪和最残暴的人，而阿尔西比亚德斯则是民主派中最不负责任和最不讲道德的人”。苏格拉底文献的主旨之一就是要向世人说明，苏格拉底并没有鼓励阿尔西比亚德斯去胡作非为，相反，苏格拉底一直在试图约束他。阿尔西比亚德斯之所以犯罪（包括渎圣罪和叛国罪），正是因为他没有听从苏格拉底的劝告，没有身体力行苏格拉底的教导。色诺芬在《回忆苏格拉底》1.2 中（像克里底亚一样）很平淡地提到，只要阿尔西比亚德斯在苏格拉底身边，他就会去行善，但是只要他离开了苏格拉底，他就有可能去作恶，但不管怎样说，他最初跟随苏格拉底是为了追求政治权力，而不是出于对苏格拉底的仰慕之情。（这是一个靠不住的理由，他为什么会因为渴望权力而追随苏格拉底，除非他相信苏格拉底能够帮助他获取权力？）柏拉图在《会饮篇》中把阿尔西比亚德斯当作一个戏剧性人物，以他作为第一人称，描述他与苏格拉底的关系。柏拉图的目的也是想要说明阿尔西比亚德斯的胡作非为与苏格拉底并无关系。苏格拉底的勇气和自制（不同于阿尔西比亚德斯无法抵制性欲的诱惑）让阿尔西比亚德斯感到羞愧，他承认他应该照苏格拉底的教导去做，但只要一离开苏格拉底，他就会受到众

[1] 见《回忆苏格拉底》1.2.12。

人的恭维，所以他很乐意看到苏格拉底死去（216b-c）。冒充柏拉图之名写的《第一个阿尔西比亚德斯》一书也记述了同样的内容。阿尔西比亚德斯自信他的能力超过任何一个公认的政治领袖，因此他打算涉足政界，而苏格拉底的任务是要让他相信，他不具备从政的条件，因为他缺少必要的知识，不知道什么是至善。在对话的最后，阿尔西比亚德斯承诺要听从苏格拉底的劝告。苏格拉底的回答谈到了他们各自的命运，他担心城邦的力量对他们两人来说都过于强大。

来自斯菲特斯的埃斯基涅斯（Aeschines of Sphettus）写的《阿尔西比亚德斯》同样讨论了野心、羞愧、知识这样的主题，我们现在保有这部著作中的一些重要章节。苏格拉底向一个不知其名的同伴述说了他与阿尔西比亚德斯的对话，一开始他就说注意到阿尔西比亚德斯的政治野心是如何受到塞米斯托克利斯 (Themistocles) 的影响，后者在公元前 480 年领导雅典人抗击波斯人，是一名杰出的政治家。接着苏格拉底指出，尽管塞米斯托克利斯的政治功绩是建立在他的知识和才智之上，但这些知识和才智最后也没有使他逃脱遭贬谪和被流放的结局。苏格拉底说这些的目的是想让阿尔西比亚德斯明白，他在才智方面远逊于塞米斯托克利斯，他完全不可能在功绩上与其一争高下。苏格拉底的策略很有效，他使得阿尔西比亚德斯突然大哭起来，将头靠在苏格拉底的膝盖上，乞求苏格拉底给他以教诲。苏格拉底向他的同伴总结说，他之所以能够打动阿尔西比亚德斯不是因为他自身的任何技巧，而是因为有天赐的秉赋，这秉赋便是他对阿尔西比亚德斯的爱："尽管我知道我教给别人的任何技巧方法对阿尔西比亚德斯来说都是无益的，但我可以常伴他左右，我相信爱的力量可以使他聪明起来"。这个情节将柏拉图在描述苏格拉底时强调的两个问题结合了起来：否认知识和自己教书育人的能力，以及爱在增进友谊、教育爱人方面

的作用[1]。

另一部流传至今、包含有苏格拉底对话重要片断的作品（除了柏拉图和色诺芬的对话之外）是埃斯基涅斯写的《阿斯帕希娅》。这部作品也涉及到其他苏格拉底文献里的主题。它记述了苏格拉底与卡里亚斯（Callias）之间的一次对话。对话的开场让我们想起了柏拉图《申辩篇》的 20a-c 一节。在这节中苏格拉底说到，卡里亚斯聘请了来自帕罗斯的名叫尤努斯(Euenus)的智者做他儿子的家庭教师，但是埃斯基涅斯对话中的情形与此刚好相反，说是卡里亚斯请求苏格拉底给他推荐一个家庭教师，令人吃惊的是苏格拉底向他推荐了有名的交际花阿斯帕希娅。苏格拉底举出阿斯帕希娅的两个特殊专长作为推荐理由：修辞方面，阿斯帕希娅教过著名的伯里克利和另一个杰出政治家吕西克勒斯（Lysicles）修辞学；再就是她在婚姻方面的指导。关于前者，在这个对话和柏拉图的《梅内克塞诺篇》里都有涉及。在《梅内克塞诺篇》里，苏格拉底发表了一个葬礼演说，他说这个演说词是由阿斯帕希娅写的，还说阿斯帕希娅还教会了许多人使用修辞术，其中包括伯里克利。修昔底德（Thucydides）在他《历史》的第二卷也提到阿斯帕希娅写过的那篇有名的葬礼演说词。至于在婚姻方面的指导则与色诺芬有关。按照苏格拉底对话中的描述，接受阿斯帕希娅英明指导的正是色诺芬本人和他的妻子。（这种指导具有典型的苏格拉底的特征。阿斯帕希娅开始举出许多事物让他们挑选。结果丈夫和妻子什么东西都想要最好的，比如最好的衣服和最好的马匹等。然后她总结说，在配偶方面，他们也想要最好的，她由此推断他们应该使自己的伴侣更加完美。）这就难怪色诺芬为什么会两次提到阿斯帕希娅擅长做媒和培训已婚妇女[2]。当然，我们不好断定

[1] 特别见《会饮篇》和《斐德罗篇》。

[2] 见《回忆苏格拉底》2.6.36 和《经济学篇》3.14。

说色诺芬本人确实像埃斯基涅斯说的那样，曾受惠于阿斯帕希娅在婚姻方面的指导。但这是苏格拉底文人圈子里的一个共同话题，后来无论谁谈及这个话题（这似乎是一个有待讨论的问题）大概都要考虑到以前的一些说法。现在我们仍很难说，柏拉图的《梅内克塞诺篇》、埃斯基涅斯和安提西尼的《阿斯帕希娅》以及各种版本的《阿尔西比亚德斯》究竟哪个重要，哪个不重要。总的说来，除了色诺芬明确提到的柏拉图的那些著作之外，我们似乎还没有什么根据来断定这些苏格拉底对话著作之间的优劣。

色诺芬的著作和柏拉图的对话录是所有苏格拉底文献中仅有的保存完整的作品。除了对苏格拉底的申辩进行描述之外，色诺芬还有4卷本的《回忆苏格拉底》，用直接引语记录了苏格拉底的对话；再就是《会饮篇》，生动地叙述了苏格拉底受邀参加一个晚宴的情形，与柏拉图《会饮篇》里的记述比较接近，无疑是参考了柏拉图的这部作品；《经济学篇》以苏格拉底对话形式论述了地产管理方面的问题，充满了道德说教。《回忆苏格拉底》的开篇说得很清楚，它的主旨就是为苏格拉底辩护。色诺芬首先列出了对苏格拉底的指控，然后引入苏格拉底的对话，详尽阐述《申辩篇》前两章的主题，即，苏格拉底非常虔诚，作为一个道德的楷模，他对自己的青年朋友产生了良好的影响，遗憾的是有些青年朋友不听他的劝告而变得道德败坏。在《回忆苏格拉底》的其余篇章里，这些主题在一系列的对话中进行了详尽地阐发。对话通常是在苏格拉底和另一人之间展开，有时据说还有其他人在场；参加对话者大多是苏格拉底的熟人，如亚里斯提卜、克力同和他的儿子克里托布鲁斯 (Critobulus) 以及色诺芬本人，另外还有一些其他人物，如伯里克利的一个儿子，智者安梯丰 (Antiphon) 和希比阿（Hippias），除此之外还有一个叫狄奥多特 (Theodote) 的高级男妓。最后一章又回到了色诺芬的《申辩篇》一开始的主题，色诺芬说苏格拉底不打算

为自己辩护，因为有神的预兆指示他说，与其让自己慢慢老去，还不如坦然赴死。他最后称颂苏格拉底是最优秀和最幸福的人，苏格拉底不仅自己在道德操守上出类拔萃，还鼓励其他人施德行善。

色诺芬的这部作品是一部更详细、更全面的《申辩篇》。为了使全书风格保持一致，该书中对话内容更多地是提倡虔诚和道德修养，并给予一些实用的建议。例如，苏格拉底曾用神意对世界的安排来开导一个名叫阿里斯托德穆斯(Aristodemus)的不敬神的朋友。他讲到眼睫毛是怎样被神设计来为眼睛挡风的（1.4.）。除此之外，他还讲了一个智者普洛狄库斯(Prodicus)的故事。这个故事说赫拉克勒斯施德行善，乐而不淫，拒绝了各种邪恶放荡的诱惑（2.1）。苏格拉底想用这个故事来劝告享乐主义者亚里斯提卜要有自制力。苏格拉底还与许多对话者一起讨论了一般原则的作用问题（3.1-5），劝一个经济拮据的朋友要让家里的女人学会做衣服（2.7），并向人们指出身体健康的重要性（3.12），提醒他们注意就餐礼仪（3.14）。这些记述并不表明这部作品就没有什么哲学内容。我们发现，苏格拉底使用了柏拉图对话中常见的论辩方法，如从各行各业的实践经验中，选取类似的事例，运用归纳论证，得出结论（2.3）。除此之外，还有很多苏格拉底盘诘他人以证明对方缺乏相关知识的故事（值得注意的是3.6和4.2节，他盘诘了声称有政治领导才能的柏拉图的兄长格老孔［Glaucon］和一位名叫欧谛德谟［Euthydemus］的青年朋友。这使我们想起了埃斯基涅斯的《阿尔西比亚德斯》和假托柏拉图之名写的《第一个阿尔西比亚德斯》中对阿尔西比亚德斯类似的盘诘）。还有两章（3.9和4.6）专门探讨了柏拉图对话中常见的哲学话题；前一章先讨论勇气是一种自然天赋还是一种教育结果（《美诺篇》的开篇就有一个类似的问题，这在《普罗泰戈拉篇》里也有明显的记述）。接着色诺芬在这一章里（见第4节和第5节）说到，苏格拉底

首先将智慧与自我克制等同起来，然后又将智慧与正义和其他德性等同起来。这一点同样与《美诺篇》和《普罗泰戈拉篇》有关，因为在这两部作品中苏格拉底都极力捍卫德性就是知识的主张。后面一章（4.6）涉及定义的问题。在柏拉图的一些对话中，苏格拉底将“某某是什么”（如“正义是什么”）这类下定义的问题看作是哲学的首要问题，并且用虔诚（在《游叙弗伦篇》里有论述）和勇气（在《拉凯篇》里有论述）作为例子来阐述其基本观点。色诺芬在这一章的第6节指出了常见于柏拉图的《美诺篇》、《高尔吉亚篇》和《普罗泰戈拉篇》中“苏格拉底的悖论”，即没有一个人是自觉地去做错事。在第11节色诺芬也提出了相关的论断，即那些知道应怎样应对危险的人是英勇的，而那些犯错误的人则是怯懦的。苏格拉底在《普罗泰戈拉篇》（359-60）中就论证了这个命题。

概括地说，有关哲学的内容在《回忆苏格拉底》中不及虔诚、德性、实践忠告重要，但是它所包含的哲学内容与其他的苏格拉底文献中包含的哲学思想基本相同，尤其是柏拉图的对话。这里就产生了一个问题，我们是相信色诺芬有关苏格拉底哲学思想及其方法的文献资料完全来源于他自己的收集，还原了历史上真实的苏格拉底，还是相信他的资料来源于其他的苏格拉底文献，尤其是柏拉图的著作。我们必须谨慎地对待这个问题。确实有些内容说明色诺芬的著作是以柏拉图的著作为基础。色诺芬的《会饮篇》（8.32）记述的波桑尼亚斯(Pausanias)和斐德罗（Phaedrus）的演讲，很明显地参照了柏拉图的《会饮篇》。色诺芬在《申辩篇》第一章中提到了许多早期有关苏格拉底审判的文献，很可能其中就包括了柏拉图的《申辩篇》。但《回忆苏格拉底》中没有明显引用柏拉图著作的内容，因此我们没有理由说，只要色诺芬讨论的主题与柏拉图一样，就一定是色诺芬用了柏拉图的资料，而不是柏拉图受色诺芬的影响，或者说他们都依赖于一个共同的资料来源，包括对历史上的苏

格拉底的回忆。（我们还不能肯定柏拉图和色诺芬完成这些著作的确切时间。）从另一方面看，色诺芬是在苏格拉底被判死刑两年前就离开了雅典，在三十多年后才重回到雅典。他绝大多数记述苏格拉底的著作都是在流放期间完成的，而他在这段时期失去了与雅典人的联系，因此他必定借助了包括柏拉图在内的其他人写的有关苏格拉底的著作，以此来帮助自己回忆并加深对苏格拉底的认识。既然前面提到可以用柏拉图的影响来解释为什么色诺芬在哲学方面与柏拉图有许多相似之处，既然我们能够断定色诺芬在离开雅典期间参阅了柏拉图的著作，那么最慎重的办法就是承认，《回忆苏格拉底》里的哲学内容不能当作一个独立的资料来源来证明历史上苏格拉底真实的哲学观点。同样，我们无法断定色诺芬对苏格拉底个性和对话的描写就一定比其他作者的描写更符合历史实情。色诺芬确实作为对话者在对话中出现过（1.3.8-15），他有时声称他也在对话的现场（1.4, 2.4-5, 4.3），但他说，大多数的对话他都没有参加。不管怎样，说他在场只是一种文学虚构。色诺芬称自己出席了《会饮篇》[1]里记述的晚宴，这个戏剧性的日子是在公元前422年，而当时他大概只有8岁。另外还有一些对话，比如与一些智者的辩论（1.6,2.1,4.4），对一些野心勃勃的年轻人的反诘（3.1-6,4.2-3），这在当时的苏格拉底文献中很流行。《回忆苏格拉底》中有关苏格拉底对话的一些描述，可能确实出自色诺芬本人或是其他人对苏格拉底对话的真实回忆，但我们没有办法确认这部作品究竟有多少内容是来自真实的回忆。这些回忆确为《回忆苏格拉底》提供了素材，但对这些素材的处理定会受为苏格拉底辩护这一目的的影响，同时还必须遵循创作苏格拉底对话的一般文学原则。

在本节的最后，我要谈及另一位作者，尽管他并未写过苏格拉底对话作品，但人们一直认为，他的作品为了解历史上真

[1] 见《会饮篇》1.1。

实的苏格拉底提供了独立的资料来源。此人便是亚里士多德。（亚里士多德写过一些现已失传的对话作品，但没有证据表明这些作品是对苏格拉底对话的描写。）与我们已经论述过的其他作者不同，亚里士多德没有亲自结识过苏格拉底，在他出生前15年苏格拉底就已去世。公元前367年他作为一个17岁的学生进入柏拉图的学园，他在这里一呆就是20年，直到公元前347年柏拉图去世。可以肯定，他在这段时间里与柏拉图有着私人的交往。在他的著作中有许多地方提到苏格拉底。他经常在上下文中提到的苏格拉底显然来自于柏拉图的描述，例如在《政治学》（1261^{a}5-8）中，他就提到了柏拉图的《理想国》，并说道“苏格拉底提议妻子、孩子以及财产应该公有”。然而，有时他的论述又表明他试图谈论的是历史上的苏格拉底。就他著作中的这些论述而言，我们必须考虑，他对苏格拉底的描写是否有未受柏拉图影响的地方。

在《形而上学》（1078^{b}27-32）的一段重要文字中，亚里士多德在论述柏拉图理念论的来源时说道：

有两件事情可以归之于苏格拉底，这就是归纳推理和普遍定义，因为它们都与知识的出发点相关；然而，苏格拉底并没有把普遍和定义当作分离存在的东西，可是他们（即柏拉图和他的后继者们）把普遍或者定义当作是分离存在的东西，并把它们叫做理念。[1]

按照柏拉图的描述，苏格拉底在几次对话中都始终坚持理念是分别存在的理论，最明显的是在《斐多篇》和《理想国》中，所有参与讨论的人都熟悉这个理论[2]。事实上，认为苏格拉底

[1] 译文参考了苗力田主编的《亚里士多德全集》第七卷，苗力田译，中国人民大学出版社，1993年，第297页。

[2] 见《斐多篇》76d，《理想国》507a-b。

没有将普遍和事例分离的主张不可能来自亚里士多德对柏拉图著作的解读，柏拉图在学园中的口述才是这个主张最初的来源。我们不一定要假定亚里士多德与年长他40岁的柏拉图的私交很好，（据说他是一个很得柏拉图欢心的学生，而且还写过一首诗来赞美柏拉图），或者说回忆苏格拉底是学园里经常讨论的一个话题。我们需要假定的是，学园里面的人都清楚苏格拉底通过柏拉图所起的作用。要不是这样就令人感到不可思议了。现代的一些学者对此表示怀疑是完全没有道理的。除了说苏格拉底没有把理念分离开来之外，学园的口传究竟还包含了其他多少内容，我们无法说清。但我认为，除了上述亚里士多德的那个否定性结论之外，这个口传完全有可能还包含了相关的两个肯定性论断，即苏格拉底一直寻求普遍定义和运用归纳推理。

柏拉图

除了被普遍看作是柏拉图最后著作的《法律篇》之外，苏格拉底出现在了柏拉图的所有对话中。更严格地说，除了《法律篇》、《申辩篇》（它本身不是一部对话著作）和《书信集》（其真实性尚有争议）之外，柏拉图的所有著作都是在描述苏格拉底的对话。然而，在这一系列的著作中，柏拉图对苏格拉底的描述还是有着相当的变化。一般认为，《智者篇》和《政治家篇》从文体风格上看，应该是柏拉图的后期著作，苏格拉底只出现在这两部对话的开头，他仅仅在这两个对话之间和这两个对话与《泰阿泰德篇》之间起承上启下的连接作用。在柏拉图的大多数对话作品中都是由苏格拉底来充当对话主角，但在这两篇对话中，主角却是一个来自埃利亚的客人（巴门尼德哲学的一个代表人物）。同样的情景也出现在后来的《蒂迈欧篇》及其未完成的续篇《克里底亚篇》中。在这两部对话中，苏格拉底仅在对话的开头短暂出现，对话的主角是另外两个人，对话的

篇名就是这两个人的名字。在《巴门尼德篇》中，苏格拉底唯一一次以一个青年男子的面目出现，他的主要作用是接受老巴门尼德在哲学方法方面的教诲。即使是在一些以苏格拉底为主角的对话里面，对他的描写也是有一些变化的。有些对话突出了苏格拉底的生平，如著名的《会饮篇》和以苏格拉底审判及其死刑为主题的对话（如《游叙弗伦篇》、《申辩篇》、《克力同篇》和《斐多篇》），以及（在一个较次要的程度）《卡尔米德篇》。有些对话著作，包括刚才提到的那些著作，生动地描述了苏格拉底的个性，表现了苏格拉底与其他人，特别是与智者及其朋友之间的谈锋。除了上面提到的著作外，属于这个主题范围内的著作还有《普罗泰戈拉篇》、《高尔吉亚篇》、《欧谛德谟篇》、《美诺篇》、《理想国》、《大比希阿篇》、《小比希阿篇》、《伊安篇》、《拉凯篇》和《吕西斯篇》。在另外一些对话中，苏格拉底依旧是主角，引导着对话的展开，但却没什么个性，仅代表着一个哲学权威的形象，虽然影响着对话的发展，但其作用并非不可由他人替代，比如来自埃利亚的客人（或许就是柏拉图）。我认为（虽然这是个仁者见仁，智者见智的问题），在《理想国》（除第一卷之外）、《斐德罗篇》、《克拉底鲁篇》、《泰阿泰德篇》和《斐莱布篇》里面，苏格拉底扮演的就是这样的角色。我们该怎样去解释柏拉图笔下苏格拉底的多变性？这种多变性对于柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底和历史上的苏格拉底之间的关系有什么意义呢？

19 世纪的一些学者通过研究柏拉图对话著作的文体特征，将 6 部对话著作单独划归为一组：这些著作是《智者篇》、《政治家篇》、《斐莱布篇》、《蒂迈欧篇》、《克里底亚篇》和《法律篇》，它们都属于柏拉图的晚期著作，因为它们在文体特征方面与经古代学者考证、被证明是柏拉图临终前仍未写完的《法律篇》有许多相似之处。19 世纪的研究还进一步确定了另一组对话著作，即《巴门尼德篇》、《斐德罗篇》、《理想国》和《泰阿泰德篇》。

这些著作在风格上与其他对话著作相比更接近柏拉图晚期的著作，以此可以假定它们属于柏拉图中期的一组著作，写作时间晚于其早期著作，但早于其晚期著作。随后的韵文类型研究虽然进一步证实了这3组划分的正确性，但最后没有能够确定每一组内各篇对话的写作顺序。不管怎样，本书认可这些研究成果。

我们需要关注的是柏拉图晚期著作的一个显著特征，那就是苏格拉底在这些对话中消失了。苏格拉底在《法律篇》中没有出现，在除了《斐莱布篇》以外的其他所有对话中也没有出现。苏格拉底在《斐莱布篇》中的作用与其在中期对话中的作用很相似，但这不包括《巴门尼德篇》。在《巴门尼德篇》中，苏格拉底起到的作用就是与巴门尼德进行对话。尽管在《斐莱布篇》、《斐德罗篇》、《理想国》和《泰阿泰德篇》中，苏格拉底还是扮演引导者的角色，但他只是一种哲学理论的代言人，一个论辩技巧的讲解者，而不是与其他人进行争论的一个人。当然这些差别不仅是判断的问题，同时也是程度的问题。我们并不是说苏格拉底在中期的对话著作中就没有他个人的特点，或者否认中期对话中的苏格拉底与早期对话中的苏格拉底之间的联系。比如，在《斐德罗篇》中，苏格拉底就赤脚行走（229a），听到了神的声音，警告他不要过早地打断讨论（242b-c）。而且，即使在早期的对话著作中，苏格拉底也充当着哲学家代言人的角色。显然在柏拉图的写作生涯中，他对苏格拉底作为哲学理想化身的关注在变化。他最开始把苏格拉底的个性看得极其重要，后来逐渐降低了其个性的重要性，以至于使苏格拉底不以个人形象出现，转而成为柏拉图哲学的代言人，在《法律篇》中甚至公开用完全没有个性特征的人物，比如用埃利亚来客和雅典人来代替苏格拉底。下面我们主要关注的是，柏拉图在其早期对话著作中对苏格拉底的描述。

这里必须再次强调，柏拉图的描述属于“苏格拉底对话”

体裁的作品，我们前面警告过，不要轻信色诺芬以及其他描写苏格拉底作者的对话作品的历史真实性。这种警告也同样适用于柏拉图对苏格拉底的描述。与色诺芬不同，柏拉图从来没有声称，他经历过他所描述的任何一次对话。但他申明，在苏格拉底受审的时候，他是在场的[1]，我认为他的这个说法是可信的，但这并不能证明他写的《申辩篇》就是对苏格拉底申辩词的实录。在一次十分关键的审判中，他明确说过，他当时并不在场；在《斐多篇》一开始，斐多就告诉了埃切克拉底(Echecrates)苏格拉底临终那天在场者的名字，他说到“我想柏拉图那天是生病了”(59b)。这段记述使柏拉图和这段叙述之间保持了一定的距离；目击者不是作者本人而是他作品中的一个人物斐多，因此目击者的说法只能看成是戏剧场景中的一部分。例如，根据《斐多篇》的叙述，苏格拉底从他的理念论和回忆说中得出了灵魂不灭的主张，这显然是柏拉图的戏剧虚构。我倾向于认为，柏拉图说苏格拉底临终时他不在场，就如同色诺芬说他在场一样，都是一种惯用的文学技巧，其实，柏拉图多半在场。

有些对话（如《卡尔德米篇》和《普罗泰戈拉篇》）发生在柏拉图出生以前，其他一些对话（如《游叙弗伦篇》、《克力同篇》和《会饮篇》）从故事背景来看，柏拉图并未出场。通常情况下，柏拉图不会说他的著作是苏格拉底对话的实录，即使他在个别情况下这么说了，如《会饮篇》中（172a-174a），那也只是一种精心设计的虚构，其中的叙述者解释了他如何能够描写出一个他本人并不在场的对话过程。对话的主旨不在历史的真实性，而在替苏格拉底辩护，并阐明其哲学观点，例如，描写苏格拉底与智者对话的主要目的就是为了凸显苏格拉底真正哲学化的生活与智者们以哲学为幌子行骗之间的巨大差别，

---

[1] 见《申辩篇》34a,38b。

这样就能够证明宣称他勾结智者纯属污蔑，对他处以死刑实在不公。明白了这个目的，那苏格拉底是否真的见过普罗泰戈拉或色拉西马科斯（Thrasymachus），或者说他们真的见过面，他们之间的对话是否就像《普罗泰戈拉篇》和《理想国》中描述的那样，都无关紧要了。同色诺芬一样，柏拉图也许采用了一些真实的回忆。至于这些真实的回忆用在了什么地方，我们并不清楚，也不认为这有多重要。

按照韵文类型研究的判断标准，我们上面提到的这组对话著作应该早于柏拉图的那些“中期对话著作”：如《巴门尼德篇》、《斐德罗篇》、《理想国》和《泰阿泰德篇》。如果还要对早期著作进行细分，我们就必须求助于非韵文类型的研究。这里亚里士多德的证据非常关键。如果我们接受亚里士多德说的苏格拉底没有将理念分离开来的这一观点，我们就能确定，那些按文体划分属于早期对话中的苏格拉底并不是历史上的苏格拉底。因为苏格拉底在这些对话中，比如《斐多篇》、《会饮篇》和《克拉底鲁篇》，都坚持一种理念分离存在的理论。现在学者们对柏拉图哲学发展进程的某些具有一定合理性的猜测的也支持了这一结论。

我们有理由说，当柏拉图让苏格拉底提出理念论，他就是在逐渐把苏格拉底变成一个替他本人发言的哲学权威，而不再是他早期对话中苏格拉底的形象。这些对话中的其他一些特征也能证实这一点。《会饮篇》有许多地方在突出苏格拉底的个人特点。一开始描写他为了参加晚宴而穿得衣冠楚楚（174a），但因为停下来在路上思考一个问题而姗姗来迟，最后在阿尔西比亚德斯的称颂中，对话达到了高潮。这种写法和苏格拉底的“阿尔西比亚德斯对话”的传统完全符合。苏格拉底在对话中还有另一个角色，那就是代表一个名叫狄欧蒂玛(Diotima)的聪明女子发言。他说是狄欧蒂玛论述了爱在教育中的作用，最后甚至还说是狄欧蒂玛洞见了美的理念（201d-212c）。所以严格地讲，

苏格拉底并没有提出自己的理论，而是作为他人理论的代言人。我认为，柏拉图采用的这种手法标志着历史上的苏格拉底和一种传统写作体裁中的苏格拉底（它们之间也难有明确的区分）转向了我们所说的柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底。作为狄欧蒂玛代言人的苏格拉底还处于转型的时期，这里的苏格拉底还不同于《斐多篇》和《理想国》中把理念论据为己有的苏格拉底。我们看到，《斐多篇》里对苏格拉底之死的描写并不是实际发生的情形，柏拉图暗示，他的叙述并不是苏格拉底发言的实录。另一个转向的标志是在谈及有关死后灵魂命运的神话时，苏格拉底以他自己的死谈到了“死后的情形”(107d)。《克拉底鲁篇》的主题，特别是它对语言意义和赫拉克利特变化理论的关注，显然与《泰阿泰德篇》和《智者篇》有着联系，可以勉强地把这种联系看作是一种变化的前奏。

除了理念论之外，还有两个学说应该是柏拉图提出的。一个是灵魂三分说。这个学说出现的时间不会早于中期著作《理想国》和《斐德罗篇》。另一个是回忆说，这个学说应该受到过毕达哥拉斯学说的影响，因为柏拉图公元前387年第一次出访西西里时，接触过毕达哥拉斯的学说。回忆说与理念论的联系十分紧密，这在《斐多篇》和《斐德罗篇》里显而易见，在《美诺篇》也有所暗示。回忆说也与轮回论紧密相关。轮回论出现在《斐多篇》和《理想国》的结尾处，是有关死后神话的中心话题，这个理论在《高尔吉亚篇》里谈得不多，但在《斐德罗篇》中有许多描述，另外在《美诺篇》和《斐多篇》的一些辩论中这个理论也不时出现。在我看来，坚信这些学说的苏格拉底不过是逐渐在成为柏拉图理论的传声筒。

于是我们看到，在这组文体风格相似的早期对话中，苏格拉底并没有坚持任何笔者认为是属于柏拉图的学说：如理念论、灵魂三分说、回忆说以及轮回论。除了大概是伪造的两部《阿尔西比亚德斯篇》，还有基本上不是苏格拉底对话而是对苏格

拉底葬礼演讲滑稽模仿的《梅内克塞诺篇》之外，属于这组对话著作的大体上有:《申辩篇》、《游叙弗伦篇》、《克力同篇》、《卡尔米德篇》、《拉凯篇》、《吕西斯篇》、《伊安篇》、《欧谛德谟篇》、《普罗泰戈拉篇》、《大希比阿篇》（其真实性还有争议）和《小希比阿篇》。除此之外，还可以加上《高尔吉亚篇》和《美诺篇》，它们大概属于过渡性的著作，它们在柏拉图早期和中期的对话之间起了承上启下的过渡作用。这里并不是说，在这些对话著作中的苏格拉底就是历史上的苏格拉底。同其他苏格拉底对话的写作者一样，柏拉图从一开始就不关心历史的真实问题，他真正关心的是苏格拉底的申辩和作为哲学典范的苏格拉底论辩。但是这些对话所描写的苏格拉底的形象，在精神上和理论上（在一定程度上，尽管并非全面）却是一致的。这些对话中的苏格拉底更加接近历史上真实的苏格拉拉底：首先这里呈现的辩论比《泰阿泰德篇》中表现的纯技术的论辩大概更加接近实际的苏格拉底对话，其次苏格拉底在这些对话中还没有完全变成柏拉图学说的代言人。

就柏拉图描写的苏格拉底而言，在“历史上的苏格拉底”和“柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底”之间并不存在什么清晰的界限。“柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底”仅仅是柏拉图在自己的著作中所描写的苏格拉底。正如我前面所指出的，柏拉图对苏格拉底的描写经历了一个清晰可辨的发展过程。他开始把苏格拉底描写成一个非常个性化的、投身于典型的哲学活动中的人，后来这个名字叫“苏格拉底”的人就成了一个传达他主张的傀儡式人物。在这个发展的最初阶段，即使柏拉图的描写十分接近历史的真实，但他也决不是简单的复制，从这个阶段过渡到更加“柏拉图”的阶段是一个渐进的过程，而不是一种突然的转向。

下一章我们要考察柏拉图早年笔下的苏格拉底。这个考察有两个预先的假定需要说明。第一，对别人的观点进行反驳质问是苏格拉底探求知识的主要方法。这种方法的目标不仅仅是

为了揭示对话人思想的前后矛盾，有时至少也是为苏格拉底提出的某些论点寻求论据的支持。第二，苏格拉底的诸多对话不能孤立地理解。有些现代学者复兴了格罗特 (Grote) 在 19 世纪提出的观点，他们认为从学说的一致性或者追求共同主题方面来看，柏拉图的对话著作与索福克勒斯[1]那样的剧作家的作品相比，并没有显示出更多的优势。我认为恰恰相反，柏拉图始终把苏格拉底描写成一个追求真理和理解的哲学家，因此他的那些描写苏格拉底整个哲学活动的对话著作是连贯一致的。当然，我们并不否认柏拉图描写的苏格拉底在不断地改变着自己的思想，也不否认柏拉图笔下苏格拉底的改变也正好反映了他自己哲学观点的转变（下一章要讨论其中的一些转变）。总之，我认为，一方面在柏拉图笔下，苏格拉底哲学充满了变化和发展，但另一方面，柏拉图还是成功地塑造了一个寻求前后一致立场的苏格拉底形象。

[1] 索福克勒斯(Sophocles, 约公元前 496—406)，古希腊三大悲剧作家之一，据说写下了 123 部作品，现存《俄底浦斯王》、《安提戈涅》和《埃阿斯》等 7 部。—— 译注

第四章

柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底

正如上一章结尾所指出的那样，我们将考察在 12 篇对话以及《申辩篇》中，柏拉图是如何表现苏格拉底的学说及其论辩方法的。这些对话几乎都具备了以下的特征：

i. **对苏格拉底性格的塑造。**苏格拉底主要被塑造成是一个好问者而不是一个老师。他不承认自己有智慧。他通过反诘法，也就是认真审查对方观念的方法，向对话者寻求难题的解答，但最后往往都徒劳无功。在有些对话中，尤其是在《普罗泰戈拉篇》和《高尔吉亚篇》中，质疑的姿态往往会变成一种权威的语气。

ii. **下定义。**许多对话都试图为德性或是其他重要的伦理概念下定义。《游叙弗伦篇》中问道“什么是虔诚？”，《卡尔米德篇》中问道“什么是节制？”，《拉凯篇》中问道“什么是勇敢？”，《大希比阿篇》中问道“什么是好，或什么是美？”，《美诺篇》和《普罗泰戈拉篇》中或明或暗地都问到一个普遍的问题“什么是德性？”。在所有的这些对话中，关于定义的讨论总是没有结果，苏格拉底和他的对话者们不得不承认，他们最终还是没有找到主要问题的答案。但在有些情况

下，原文的字里行间似乎暗示了正确答案。

iii. **伦理学**。所有这些对话都涉及广义的伦理学问题，即人应该怎样生活的问题。除了那些专门探讨定义的对话外，《克力同篇》讨论的是一个现实的伦理问题：苏格拉底在被判刑之后该不该越狱；《高尔吉亚篇》和《欧诺德谟篇》讨论了人生目的。从表面上看，《伊安篇》是唯一的例外，因为这部作品考察了一个职业诵诗者声称他拥有智慧的断言。但即便如此，《伊安篇》里的讨论与其他对话中普遍的伦理追求仍有着密切的联系，因为揭穿了伊安拥有智慧的谎言就意味着，诗人和诵诗者其实都不受智慧的引导，而是受制于非理性的灵感，因此诗歌并不像希腊传统所强调的那样，对教育有巨大的促进作用。这部简短的对话著作可以看作是柏拉图早期讨论教育目的和教育者必备条件的文章，这个话题在柏拉图的著作中占有很重的分量。

iv. **智者派**。在有些对话中，如两篇“希比阿”的对话，还有《普罗泰戈拉篇》、《高尔吉亚篇》、《欧谛德谟篇》和《美诺篇》里的对话，其主题就是以描绘苏格拉底和许多智者以及学生朋友之间的交锋而展开的。这些对话深化了在《申辩篇》中阐明的为苏格拉底辩护的主题。

下面我们将对这些话题进行详细的考察。

苏格拉底否认有智慧

苏格拉底说他自己一无所知，唯一知道的就是自己的无知。这成了古时的一句名言。这样一个自相矛盾的表述，显然是对柏拉图的误读。虽然苏格拉底经常说他不知道怎么回答辩论所

涉及的问题，但是他从来没有说过他什么都不知道。事实上，他有几次强调过，他有一定的知识，这在《申辩篇》里最为明显。在这篇对话中他有两次声明，他知道放弃自己神圣的使命是错误和可耻的行为(29b, 37b)。他所要否认的是他拥有智慧[1]，继而否认他在教导民众。显然他明白，教育就是授人以智慧和学识（19d-20c)。考虑到他在《申辩篇》里宣称，只有神才拥有真正的智慧，人的智慧与这种真正的智慧相比（23a-b）根本不值一提，那么他否认有智慧可以理解为是对人的局限性的承认。拥有一种能够洞察万物的智慧，那是神所独有的特权。无论是苏格拉底还是其他任何人都不能奢望有这种智慧，苏格拉底否认自己有这种智慧，其实是在坚决抵制人类普遍存在的那种亵渎神灵的傲慢。

尽管对人类智慧的贬低确实是《申辩篇》中的一个基调，但苏格拉底之所以否认自己拥有智慧，否认他在教导民众，不是为了让自己与神的智慧一较高下，而是为了凸显他与典型的人类智慧的差别。这种典型的人类智慧是通过泥瓦匠、鞋匠等手艺人体现出来的。他认为（22d-e)，就他们都是各行各业的专家能手这一事实来说，手艺人确实拥有智慧，但他们若以为其专门技艺可以运用到手艺之外的事情，那便是大错特错。这种专门技艺是一整套条理化的知识，是通过系统的学习和相互的讨教获得的，拥有这种知识的专家能够解决其手艺所涉及的实际问题，并且能够说清楚他们提出的解决办法的理由。智者派声称他们掌握了“政治技艺”[2]，这种技艺可以运用到社会和个人生活的各个方面，帮助人们获得成功，并且可以传授给别人。虽然苏格拉底否定了智者的这种断言，但并不是因为人类无法掌握这种知识，而是因为智者实践的这种技艺还不满足对

[1] 见《申辩篇》21b。

[2] 见《普罗泰戈拉篇》319a和《申辩篇》19d-20c。

真正的专门技艺的要求，比如，他们的技艺没有经过系统的学习和传授[1]。苏格拉底否认自己具备这种专门技艺[2]，但并没有说他或者其他任何人就不能掌握这种技艺。

我们没有理由假设说苏格拉底否认有知识就是所谓的一种“苏格拉底讽刺”的表现，即为了论辩的目的而假装自己一无所知。确实，苏格拉底经常在对话中称赞他的对话者比他更有智慧[3]，但读者无论如何都不应被苏格拉底欺骗。实际上苏格拉底说的都是反话，他的这些称赞都是为了突出对话者所说知识的可疑性，或是质疑对话者的权威性。然而，从《申辩篇》的上下文来看，苏格拉底不可能是为了辩论需要才说自己一无所知的。苏格拉底并没有假装遵从一个表面上博学多闻、但实际上徒有虚名的知识权威。他是非常真诚地用自己的知识状态与一种相应的知识范式进行比较，以发现这种范式的欠缺。

如果说苏格拉底否认有知识事实上就是否认有智慧或者懂专门技艺，那么我们就能看到这种否认与苏格拉底对知识的独特主张是一致的。普通人能够理解一些特定的东西，但不是按照专家的那种认知方式来理解，尤其是普通人不能像专家那样，把一些个别知识纳入到一个全面的知识网络之中，通过这个网纲将个别的知识与其他知识或者与一个知识结构整体联系起来，从而提出他们对这些知识的解释。但是普通人又是如何知道一些零散的知识的呢？这通常是直接或间接由专家传授的。然而，在道德问题上苏格拉底不承认有任何专家，至少不承认人类这在此问题上有任何专家。那么，他无论付出什么代价也不能够放弃自己哲学使命的想法又是从何而来？一个可能的答

[1] 见《普罗泰戈拉篇》319d-320b和《美诺篇》89c-94e。

[2] 见《申辩篇》20c。

[3] 见《游叙弗伦篇》52a-b，他说他应该向游叙弗伦学习怎样反驳麦勒图斯对他的指控。

案就是他听到了神的声音，因为神才是道德问题的专家。抛开苏格拉底是如何知道神是道德专家（《游叙弗伦篇》提到这个问题）这个问题不谈，事实上在《申辩篇》和其他对话著作中都没有提到或是暗示过，是神让苏格拉底坚持他的哲学使命。

只要我们联想到苏格拉底并没有声称他拥有道德方面的知识而只是表示了他的看法，问题或许就可以得到解决。但是在柏拉图笔下，苏格拉底说过，他拥有道德方面的知识，我们为什么要断定柏拉图并不能代表苏格拉底的真实想法呢？正如我们已经看到的，苏格拉底的确承认有一种他自己无法达到的理想的知识范式，但他说过自己懂得某些特殊的知识。这相当于是说，只有满足这种范式才能称作知识，而苏格拉底自己的知识状态不能满足这种范式的要术，因此只能称作意见。只要把专家的知识称作完整的知识，把普通人的知识称作零散的知识，我们就可以区分满足范式要求的知识和不满足范式要求的知识，这样也就用不着否认后者也可以冠以知识的头衔（如果我们愿意，我们也可以把专家的知识称为“严格意义上”的知识，把普通人的知识称为“日常用途”或“宽泛的，大众意义上”的知识。尽管柏拉图没有用这种说法，但这种区分还是存在的）。然而我们还有一个问题，既然苏格拉底承认他不是一个道德专家，他又是如何知道他所宣称的那些个别的道德真理呢？

说来或许会让人失望，直接的答案就是苏格拉底没有说过他知道那些道德真理。考察他的辩论活动，或许能帮我们找到一些线索。他经常与人辩论似乎就是为了揭穿辩论者的知识不过是些前后矛盾的信念而已，从而动摇他们的知识信念，就像他在《申辩篇》里面所描述的那样。但有时他至少也清楚地意识到，如果对话者坚持自己信以为真的信念，对于那些信念的认真审查就不仅要揭示出它们的前后矛盾，而且还要显示出有些信念的虚妄性。一个特别明显的例子就是波卢斯 (Polus) 和卡里克勒斯 (Callicles) 在《高尔吉亚篇》里断言，宁可冤枉他人

也不能受他人冤枉。苏格拉底声称（479e），他批驳了上述说法，最后让波卢斯接受了相反的观点，即，宁可受人冤枉，也不能冤枉他人。他还在与卡里克勒斯辩论结束时说（508e-509a），他的结论是由“严实牢固的论据”（即不可抗拒的力量）得出来的。然而，论断固然坚决，但同时他仍认为自己并未拥有知识：“我的立场始终未变，那就是我不知道这些事物是如何产生和变化的，而我至今遇到的任何一个人，包括现在遇到的这些人，也都不知道，如果他们说知道，那就会让他们显得很可笑”。

这里我们看到了一种对比，一边是苏格拉底否认的专家的知识，另一边是苏格拉底赞许的由反诘法产生的一种知识态度。不断的验证表明，有些命题不能否认，否认了就会使自己自相矛盾。然而，从理论上来说，持守这些命题只是暂时的，因为总是存在着这样的可能性，即某个人可以提出一个崭新的论据来反驳那个“严实牢固的论据”，正如苏格拉底自己所承认的那样（509a2-4）。但在现实中，苏格拉底完全确信这些论据是建立在颠扑不破的原则基础之上，非常牢固，不可能被任何人驳倒。苏格拉底以普通人身份认识的真理就是他通过反诘法获得的真理吗？这是一个有趣的想法，只是我们没有在文本中找到明确的证据。据说在《克力同篇》（49a）中，苏格拉底和克力同都赞同人决不能行不义之事这一观点，这种共识使他们不得不一起思考苏格拉底越狱的正当性。显然，这里明确地暗示了他们的共识是基于一些充分的理由，否则苏格拉底和克力同为何不改变他们的想法？但是没有证据说这些理由是通过对苏格拉底和克力同意见的反诘得来的。

我们的结论是，尽管苏格拉底有时把诘问对话者的信念当作揭示真理的方法，尽管这种方法为获得知识提供了一个可能的模式，但我们也不能证明苏格拉底宣称过，所有普通人的道德知识都是由反诘法取得的。他有过一些暗示，说他的道德真

理是建立在充分论证之上，但他并没有阐明获得这些普通人的道德知识的先决条件是什么。

《高尔吉亚篇》里的对话提供了最为明显的例证，其中反诘法被看作是发现真理的主要方法。在这篇对话中，我们发现，苏格拉底不再充作一个普通的发问者，而是声称自己拥有专门的知识。这篇对话的主题之一就是讨论修辞学[1]在教育中的作用，也就是在提升道德生活中的作用。苏格拉底为各类真正关乎人的灵魂良善、身体健康的技艺和与此相对应的各类有名无实的技艺分门别类（463a-465a)。真正关乎灵魂良善的技艺通称为“政治学”，也就是指生活的技艺。按规定，政治学还可以再细分为以促进灵魂健康为宗旨的“立法”（比如有助于身体健康的体操技艺）和以维护灵魂向善为目的的“司法”（比如保护身体健康的医学)。与政治学对应的一种有名无实的技艺就是修辞学，因为演说家的目的不是使人们向善，而是通过说服的手段来迎合人们的愿望，帮助他们获取想要得到的东西。所以说，修辞学提升的不是真正向善的生活，而只是给人一种向善的假象，就像美容术这种技艺不是使人们真正地健康，而只是让人们看起来健康而已（465c)。因此，政治学才是一门真正的生活技艺。与他在《申辩篇》中的立场刚好相反，苏格拉底在《高尔吉亚篇》中不仅宣称他在实践这种技艺，而且断言，除了他没有别人在做这件事情，因为只有才关心他同胞的福祉。

苏格拉底这种作为政治学唯一真正实践者的思想在《美诺篇》的结尾（99e-100a）处有一个生动的再现。他在辩论结束时总结说，德性不是教育出来的，“除非存在着一个能够向别人传授政治技艺的政治家”（即除非有某个人能够将自己专门的生活技艺传授给另外一个人，然而普通的政治家是做不到这

[1] rhetoric，也可称为修辞术或雄辩术。——译注

一点的），否则德性就只能是一种神赐的天赋。他接着说，这样一个人很像荷马所描述的在地府中的提瑞西阿斯 (Tiresias)[1]："他是地府中唯一能够现形的，其他人只是像幽灵一样地游荡"。这里提到《奥德赛》第十一卷所描述的奥德修斯（Odysseus）的地府之行，使我们想起了《普罗泰戈拉篇》中苏格拉底与智者会面的情景。苏格拉底向智者引用了奥德修斯的话(315b-c)，他把自己看作是一个有生命的人，而把智者看作是一些幽灵（即鬼魂）。于是，"与那些幽灵相比"[2]，他就是一个真正懂得生活技艺的专家，真正懂得德性的本质[3]，而且他有一种全新的方法向世人传授德性的本质[4]。这个方法就是他的回忆法。他认为永恒的真理都植根于灵魂之中，但在灵魂转世的过程中这些真理往往被人们遗忘，只有通过批判性的反思才能够被重新记忆起来。

这样一个带有权威特征的苏格拉底形象是早期"苏格拉底式的"对话向中期柏拉图式对话过渡阶段的一个特点。这也是我们前面提到的，苏格拉底逐渐变为柏拉图代言人的一个例证。

定义

苏格拉底对于下定义的兴趣源于他对专门知识的探求。专家都了解他们各自的研究主题。在苏格拉底看来，关于任何一个研究主题的基本知识就是关于这个主题究竟是什么的知识。关于专门知识，在《大希比阿篇》(286c-d）里有明确的论述。

---

[1] 见《奥德赛》。

[2] 见《美诺篇》100a。

[3] 见《美诺篇》和《普罗泰戈拉篇》。

[4] 见《美诺篇》。

苏格拉底告诉希比阿，当他称赞某些行为是高尚的，谴责另一些行为是可耻的时候，有人向他发难道："你是怎样知道一些行为是高尚的而另一些行为是可耻的呢？告诉我，你所说的高尚是什么意思呢？"因为不能回答这个问题，苏格拉底就向希比阿请教，因为他博学多闻，关于什么是"高尚"的知识只不过是他广泛知识中"很小、很不重要的一部分"。如果希比阿不能回答这个问题，那他拥有的知识既没有价值，也不够专业(286e)。

柏拉图的很多对话作品都强调了"某某是什么？"这一问题的重要性。通常的辩论方式是以一个主题作为讨论的出发点，然后就这个主题提出一些具体问题，例如，就德性这个主题而言，一个人该如何去努力获得德性？如果连一个大家都认可的德性概念都没有，就很难讨论如何获得德性。因此，尽管从心理上讲，是具体问题优先，但从认识论讲，是"X是什么？"这样一个抽象问题优先，因为你不先知道"X是什么"，就不没办法回答关于"X"的具体问题，这个顺序不能颠倒过来。柏拉图的对话讨论了很多类似的、有争议性的问题。《拉凯篇》(189d-190d）里讨论了如何灌输勇敢这样一种具体的德性；《美诺篇》(70a-71b）和《普罗泰戈拉篇》(329a-d，360e-361a）讨论了德性的普遍原则问题；《理想国》第一卷（354b-c）讨论了正义是否对正义者有利的问题；《游叙弗伦篇》(4b-5d）讨论了一个更为具体的问题，即游叙弗伦检举他父亲杀人的行为是否算得上是虔诚和神圣。同样，在《卡尔米德篇》(158c-59a）里，就卡尔米德是否有自制力这个问题引起了争议，要弄清楚这个问题，我们就要先弄清楚什么是自制力。

如上面最后两个例证所示，如果不先回答"E这一性质是什么？"的问题，我们就不能确定"某物或某人是否具有E这一性质？"，这就导致了人们指责苏格拉底犯有所谓的"苏格拉底谬误推理"的毛病，即他主张，除非你知道一种性质的定义，

否则你就不可能知道某物是否具有这一性质。坚持这个观点对于苏格拉底来说很困难,这不仅因为它容易遇到无数的反例(如即使我们不知道货币的定义,我们也能够知道一张5镑的纸币就是货币的一种),而且还因为苏格拉底所推崇的定义方法就是要先从属于同一类或拥有同一种性质的具体事物说起[1]。显然,如果不在下定义之前先说清楚属于同一类的或是拥有同一种性质的具体事物是哪些,那苏格拉底推崇的这种方法就行不通。这样说来,我们也不能通过举反例来反驳一个定义。因为,既然事先对某性质没有一个明确的定义,我们就不能判断某物是否具有这一性质,同样,如果事先对某性质没有一个明确的定义,我们也就说不清楚某物是不是就一定没有这种性质。但是,因为提出反例是苏格拉底反诘法中惯用的一种方式,所以谬误推理破坏了苏格拉底的辩论方法。

事实上,苏格拉底并没有颠覆自己的方法论。苏格拉底在《游叙弗伦篇》和《卡尔米德篇》里讨论得最多的就是,如果不事先回答"E这种性质是什么?",就不能确定"某物是不是有E这种性质?"。苏格拉底并不认为这类问题都有争议。他主张寻求事物的一种性质,这种性质可以在所有毫无争议地都有E这一性质的事物中找到,而在所有毫无争议地没有这一性质的事物中找不到,然后看是否能将这种性质应用到对是否有E这一性质仍存有争议的事物中,以此来确定它们是否有E这种性质。(事实上,这种辩论方式不可能最终消除争议,因为最初关于性质的争议现在变成了另外一种争议,即将性质的外延从无争议的事物扩大到有争议的事物是不是恰当的问题。然而这又是另外一个问题)。但在《大希比阿篇》中,苏格拉底的强硬挑战者断言,在搞清"高尚"的定义之前不可能回答某一件具体的事情是不是高尚这个问题。当苏格拉底和希比阿都

[1]见《美诺篇》72a-c。

无法解释什么是高尚的时候，苏格拉底想象自己再次面对这个强硬挑战者的追问，“如果你不知道什么是高尚，你又怎么知道有些言辞或者行为就是高尚的呢？如果你就处于这种状态之中，你认为，你活着真的比你死了要好吗？”（304d-e）。我们不能草率地说这是某个其他人的观点而不是苏格拉底自己的观点，因为苏格拉底表明，那个强硬的挑战者在很大程度上其实就是他的“第二自我”：“他恰好同我有比较密切的关系，而且就跟我住在同一间房子里面”（304d）。然而，苏格拉底并不是简单地赞同挑战者的观点，因为他最后总结说（304e），他知道那句格言“高尚的事情很难言说”说得不错，但就挑战者来说，他并不了解这一点。所以挑战者的观点与苏格拉底的观点并不是完全相同，但却密切相关（确实是这样因而很容易混淆），而且确实还构成一种挑战，如果接受，甚至有可能推翻苏格拉底整个的一套辩论方法。因此，这个挑战为我们把上述那个挑战者的观点与苏格拉底实际上比较谦和的观点区分开来了，即承认如果给一个性质下一个明确的定义，确实无法说清有些事物是否有这种性质，但并不是所有事物都是如此。但作为一个领域里的专家就是要能够言之有据，对于有无争议的事物都能够说清楚它是否有所讨论的那种性质或属于那种类别，在苏格拉底看来，要说清楚这个问题，专家还要能够说清楚这种属性或类别究竟是什么。

在《拉凯篇》、《美诺篇》、《普罗泰戈拉篇》和《理想国》第一卷中讨论的例子展示了另一种讨论的模式；这里引发探寻某性质定义的问题不再是一个给定的、有争议的事物是否具有这一性质的问题，而是说这种性质本身是否还有其他性质的问题，具体说就是正义是否有益于正义者，勇敢和德性（包括所有的德性如勇敢、节制、正义、智慧等）是否可教授。在《美诺篇》（71b）里，苏格拉底用了一个类比来说明定义的先后顺序，不过他说的也只是些先前我们已知道的内容。比如，如果我根本不知道美诺是谁，我就不可能知道他有什么特征，例如，

他是富有还是英俊。同样，如果我完全不知道德性是什么，我就不可能知道哪些事情是符合德性的，而且也不知道怎样去拥有德性。

按照一种特定的方式来理解，这种辩论确实没什么新意。如果我从来没有听说过美诺这个人，我对“美诺长得是不是英俊？”的回答只能是“很抱歉，我不知道你说的是谁”。同样，如果我不知道善是什么，我对“善是否可教？”的回答也只能是“很抱歉，我不知道你说的是什么”。这里我们看到，一个人能够清晰地表述一个主题的先决条件是了解这个主题，然而这个先决条件并没有满足。清晰表述的先决条件并不要求对主题有一个明确的定义。拿人来说，比如美诺这个人，我用不着说清楚美诺不同于他人的独特品质到底是什么。对于这个人，我可以就把他看成是“站在那边的男人”，或是“我去年在酒吧遇到的一个人”。讨论一般的概念也会出现类似的情况，比如，当我们在使用“德性”这个词的时候，最起码的要求就是我们必须知道我们在谈论的东西是什么。但是，使用这个词并不一定以掌握这个词的普遍意义（即定义）为先决条件。回到我们前面的那个例子，我在使用“货币”这个词的时候，即使我不能够给出有关货币的定义，我也知道我正在谈论的是什么，只要我能够认识具体的货币，这就已经足够了。从这个意义上说，美诺显然一开始就知道他谈论的是什么，不然他就不会提出“德性是否可教授？”的问题。由此可见，要清晰表述一个主题就要先确定这个主题是什么，这道理已经说了千万遍，但这并没有证明一定要先有一个明确的定义。既然没有一个明确的定义我们也可以知道自己在谈论的是什么，那么苏格拉底为什么还要坚持定义的优先性呢？

为了回答这个问题，我们应该注意到，引发对于具体德性和一般德性定义探讨的其实是一个实际的问题，即《拉凯篇》、《美诺篇》、《普罗泰戈拉篇》里面提出的如何养成那些好品质

的问题。这个实际的问题需要一个什么样的关于品质的定义呢？显然，一个人仅仅知道自己正在谈论什么是不够的，因为正如我们已经看到的，能提出这个实际问题就说明其实他已经知道谈论的是什么。因此我们还需要能够阐明所讨论品质的词典含义是什么。就我已经解释过的作为分散的“德性”和作为集合的“德性”的希腊原文而言，其比较准确的含义说明可能包括：

1. 人的一种品质，一系列使人获得美满生活的品质之一。这一系列品质中的任何一种都是获得美满生活的必要条件，但只有其总和才是充分条件。

2. 上述各种品质之和。

解决有关德性的实际问题又为什么一定要人具备一种给出德性的词典定义的能力呢？这种能力确实推进了问题的探讨，明确了要去寻求那些有助于美满生活的品质，但是它没有说明那些品质包括什么，更重要的是它没有说明怎样去培养那些品质。人们可能会同意有关德性的定义，但是在解答实际问题时又会产生严重的意见分歧，例如有些人认为带来美满生活的那些品质完全是自然的馈赠，就如同人的智力和贵族血统一样，另一些人则认为他们能够通过实践来养成良好的品质。由此我们可以看出，解决关于德性的实际问题就需要有一种不同的定义；它要求对品质的含义作出实质性的说明。这种实质性的说明包括把品质的集合体分解为品质的组成部分（如德性是由正义和节制等品质组成），包括进一步解释那些品质的含义（如节制就是用理性来控制所有的欲望）。这就是说它提供了一种德性理论，通过它来解释德性的构成和目标，进而指出养成德性的恰当方法。

寻求这种实质性的定义也是对专家的要求。德性方面的专家应该能够解释清楚什么是德性，其目的就是为了有效地指导

人们如何养成和保持德性，正如健康专家应该能够解释清楚什么是健康，其目的就是为了有效地指导人们如何获得和保持健康。上面提到的对话文本也多少证实了苏格拉底寻求的正是这种实质性的定义，但是要说这些对话已经清晰地把实质性定义与上面讨论的那些品质的词典定义区分开来，这个结论又过于简单化。

在这些对话中，苏格拉底有时明确、有时暗示地将知识或某种认知状态与德性等同起来，这说明他寻求的是实质性的而不是纯概念性或“分析性的”定义。在《美诺篇》里，对此有着最为详尽的讨论（上面讲过，这个对话处于从“苏格拉底的”对话向“柏拉图的”对话的过渡性作品）。75 到 76 段的对话中，苏格拉底试图向美诺解释，他要寻求的不是一连串像勇敢、自制这样的具体德性，而是对那些具体德性共有的东西进行说明，他列举了两个具体的事例来说明这种共性，一个是形状，另一个是颜色。他对形状作出了概念上的解释，即形状是一种固体的限度；对颜色进行了“科学的”描述（以公元前 5 世纪哲学家恩培多克勒 [Empedocles] 的理论为基础），即颜色是从可感觉的物体中流出来的粒子流，它以合适的尺寸和形状通过眼睛里的管道而达到人的内在感觉器官。苏格拉底并没有明确说这是两种不同的定义；他说他更喜欢用形状来说明问题，但他没有说原因，他只是以“过于精细”来形容颜色，这也许是说颜色不如形状，因为颜色要涉及到过于复杂的技术性词汇。尽管这个表明了相比实质性的定义，苏格拉底更喜欢概念性的解释，但他还是对德性提出了实质性的描述，即德性是知识。虽然这确是基于德性是有益于有德之人这样一个概念性的命题，但它并没有说清楚德性这个概念，（在希腊语中，德性与有益是相通的，87e），它只是确认了知识是人生取得成功的必要或充要条件。这一结论不是单纯地依靠词义的解释，而是通过引证一个有关如何获得美满生活的高度概括性的命题得来的。这一命

题指出，既然每一种可欲求的品质，如力量或无畏等，都可能导致灾难，那么只有那种绝对有益的东西才可以指导人们的行为，这种东西就是可等同于知识的智慧（87d-89c）。这个定义使得苏格拉底似乎放弃了他原先的主张，转而修正了他的观点，认为通过考察那些可疑的经验事实而断定，德性不是知识，德性只是合理的信念（89c-97c），而且也没有什么德性专家，除非德性是某种知识才可能有德性专家（这是另一个概念性命题）。在苏格拉底的辩论中，概念性的命题和有关人性的经验性主张结合起来形成了一种最实用的德性理论，这种理论能说清楚各种具体德性共有的东西是什么。

在《美诺篇》里面，如何养成德性的这个实际问题导致了苏格拉底把德性当作一种认知状态，作了一番实质性的描述。这不是一种巧合，另外两个对话也从讨论德性问题开始，一个讨论了一般的德性问题（《普罗泰戈拉篇》），另一个讨论了具体的德性问题（《拉凯篇》里的勇敢），两篇对话显示了相似的论辩发展模式。在《普罗泰戈拉篇》里面，苏格拉底的年轻朋友希波克拉底开始就假设，可以通过普罗泰戈拉的教授来养成德性，但是他拒绝智者把德性看作是一组偶然联系在一起的品质的观点，而赞同《美诺篇》里所提出的德性即知识的理论。在《拉凯篇》里，在拒绝了各种不同的意见之后，关于如何培养勇敢这种品质的问题引出了勇敢就是认识什么是危险和什么是安全这一定义（194e-195a）。这个定义最终被否定了，因为关于什么是危险和什么是安全的知识与关于什么是坏和什么是好的知识完全一样，这样勇敢也就成了有关什么是坏和什么是好的知识。但这种知识正是相当于作为整体的德性，那么勇敢不是像原来假定的那样，仅仅是德性的一部分（198a-199e），而是德性的整体。因此对话结束的时候，参与对话的人都承认，他们没有弄清勇敢究竟是什么。要不要接受这个毫无结果的辩论，评论者们意见不一，如果不接受这个结果，引出此结果的

假定就应该被放弃。这里的关键在于德性的实际问题不仅引出了一种对于品质问题的实质性描述，而且还引出了《美诺篇》和《普罗泰戈拉篇》所提出的同样的论述。

我这里并不是说，在写作这些对话的时候，柏拉图已经清楚地认识到纯概念性的定义和以知识理论为例证的实质性定义之间的区别。事实上，就是在《美诺篇》这个我认为是成书时间最晚的一篇对话里面，即使对德性定义进行了最为详细的讨论，柏拉图也只是列举了其中的一种典型定义方式而没有作出任何明确的区分，这就表明他还没有达到从理论上来区别这两种定义方式的程度。我觉得，柏拉图的惯常做法表明，他比较倾向于实质性的定义方式而不是概念式的定义方式，讨论的实践导向也证实了这一点。

有时候对话的过程交代得不是很清楚。在《游叙弗伦篇》，开始提出的问题是“哪一些事情的品质（特别是指人的行为）是虔诚的？”当游叙弗伦提出（6e-7a），神灵赞成的就是虔诚的时候（它非常接近希腊人通常对 *hosion* 的解释），苏格拉底从他的说法推出了一个观点，即他之所以认为神灵赞成的事情就是虔诚的是因为“事情本身就是虔诚的”（10d）。那么我们就不能说虔诚之所以为虔诚是因为得神之赞许，这样使得剩下的讨论完全在寻求那些本身是虔诚因而得神赞许的行为。我们也可以说苏格拉底在这里探讨了虔诚的实质性定义，并且用人性以及人与神的关系的理论来加以回答，但是苏格拉底在对话中没有给这个理论提供更多的内容。《卡尔米德篇》里的讨论更不好把握，部分原因在于它所讨论的德性，即 *sophrosune*（通常译为“节制”，但有时译为“心灵的健康”更好一些）是非常模糊的，它既是一种行为的方式，同时又是一种指导人们行为的精神和心态。因此就产生了各种不同的看法，对于它的讨论究竟属于概念式的解释，还是实质性的说明，确实比《拉凯篇》、《美诺篇》和《普罗泰戈拉篇》里的定义更难进行归类。

伦理学

寻求定义就是寻求专业知识。拥有专业知识的人往往有一套与其专业相关的理论，明白其基本规律，可以解决很多理论和实践上的问题。在我们前面所讨论过的那些对话中，可以看出苏格拉底是在寻求一种可以应用于人类德性的理论，他在有些对话中试图寻求一种有关某种具体德性的理论（如《游叙弗伦篇》里讨论的怜悯，《拉凯篇》里讨论的勇敢，《卡尔米德篇》里讨论的自制力)，在另外一些对话中，则试图探求一种宏观的德性论。在所有的这些对话里面，苏格拉底的这种寻求至少在表面上是不成功的，因为在每一对话结束的时候，苏格拉底和他的对话者都会承认他们并没有解释清楚德性或某种具体德性究竟是什么。但可以看出，这些对话也存在一些不同之处。在3个涉及某种具体德性的对话中，有关德性的讨论更多的是试探性的，苏格拉底并没有打算提出任何肯定的观点，他似乎很愿意接受最后所面对的思想死结。然而，在《美诺篇》和《普罗泰戈拉篇》里，苏格拉底明确地提出了德性即知识的论点。从表面上来，讨论虽然又走进了死胡同，但这并不意味着苏格拉底就放弃了上述论点。我认为，在柏拉图的这些对话里面，苏格拉底虽然还没有提出一种完全成熟的德性理论（建立这种德性理论一直是他思想的目标所在)，但他至少提出了这个理论的大体轮廓。于是在这些寻求定义的对话里面，苏格拉底的形象已经从一个只会批判的探询者变成了某种理论的支持者（虽然他不是一个充分意义上的专家)。这样就引出了一个问题，这种形象的转变究竟是柏拉图认为历史上的苏格拉底确实有此一变，还是柏拉图只是想通过苏格拉底之口来更多地表达他自己的观点。

苏格拉底德性理论的基本原理在于，它把德性看成是一种可以确保生活美满的观念与要想获得成功就要知道什么对自己

是最好的这一实质性论点结合了起来。这个理论又是基于一种更加全面的有关人类行为动机的理论。这种理论说明，行为者要为自己谋幸福的思想（即促进最大幸福，达到生活美满）能够推动他朝着实现这个目标的方向努力。这种动机包括了欲望和信念两方面的因素；苏格拉底认为[1]每个人都追求美好的东西。从上下文来看，苏格拉底的这个主张可以理解为是一种坚定的观点。这种观点认为对美好事物的渴望是一种永恒不变的动机，它要求每个人都清楚他所追求的美好是什么，并集中精力朝着某个方向去努力。因为有了追求的目标，人的欲望就会被锁定在经由思考确定出的目标上，避免受到与之相冲突的欲望的干扰。因此，正确的行为必须要有正确的目标，而要有正确的目标则要求行为者对什么是美好的事物要有一个正确的观念。

按照这种理论，人的行为动机完全是单一和自利的；每个行为者永远都朝着他或她认为是最美好的事情去努力，失败往往是因为没有认识到什么才是对自己最好的，也就是说失败是因为认知上的缺陷，而不应归结为是动机有问题。苏格拉底在《普罗泰戈拉篇》中详细地论述了这一点，他认为行为者的全部追求可以用享乐主义来解释，人就是想过一种最大限度地享受快乐、逃避痛苦的生活。

按照这个假定，做错事情与追求快乐或者满足欲望并没有关系；人之所以会做错事是因为人在评价什么是最大的快乐的时候犯了错。正如苏格拉底所说（358d）“按照人的本性，人不会去做众人都认为不好的事，而会去做众人都认为好的事”。苏格拉底本人究竟是接受了享乐主义的主张，还是仅仅为了攻击普罗泰戈拉，说他没什么思想，他所说的不过是些常识？

[1] 见《美诺篇》77c, 78b。

评论家们在这个问题的看法上有重大分歧。但是毫无疑问，不管怎样，苏格拉底自己确实主张人的德性观念是他行为动机的唯一根据（在《美诺篇》里也有论述）。德性即知识的观点直接来源于苏格拉底的主张，这个主张在古代是众所周知的，它否定了行为者可能去做违背自己明智判断的事（即否定了意志的软弱）。按照亚里士多德的描述[1]，苏格拉底曾经断言“除非因为失误，否则没有人会认为他正在做的是有悖于他认为是最好的事”，简单说来就是“无人故意犯错”[2]。

就前面的论述来看，苏格拉底的德性理论是把德性等同于某种可以确保生活美满的品质，然后又基于上面提到的那种动机理论，将这种品质等同于行为者掌握的什么对自身最好的知识。但是，这个理论缺乏道德的内容，它没有指出或者是暗示出，对于行为者来说，最好的事情就是过上一种合乎道德的正当生活。如同传统德性实践所规定的那样，过一种正义的和有节制的生活。“正义的”意味着要尊重和关心他人，“节制的”意味着要放弃自我欲望的满足。但是，如果要说苏格拉底有些独特之处的话，那就是他一直坚持道德的优先性。我们可以在《申辩篇》里看到，他说过他知道，不管怎样他都不能做错的事情，他要服从神灵的旨意去从事哲学的思考。《克力同篇》的基本论点就是一个人决不能做坏事（或者是“做违法的事情”）。这个道德原则使得他放弃了越狱的打算（49a-b）。苏格拉底认为，对于行为者来说，最好的生活就是按照道德规范去生活，这样就与上面提到的动机理论联系起来了。根据这个论点，无人故意犯错的口号就有了一种道德的向度，“没有人愿意做坏事”（或者是做不义之事）[3]，所有做错事的人都是不是出自本意（或者

---

[1] 见《尼各马可伦理学》1145b26-7。

[2] 见《普罗泰戈拉篇》345e。

[3] 见《高尔吉亚篇》509e。

说是“无意”的）。这就是众所周知的“苏格拉底悖论”在道德论上的表述。

有道德的生活对于我们人来说就是最好的生活。这个论点有一个重要的作用，就是将苏格拉底道德优先的直觉认识与他的利己动机论连接起来。正是基于这一动机理论，他才把德性等同于知识。这个论点也是苏格拉底整个思想的主旨所在。它极其重要，但让我们感到惊讶的是，苏格拉底的对话并没有提供什么论据来支持这个论点。在《克力同篇》的47e处，正义和非正义被分别比喻为灵魂的健康状态和疾病状态；因此，正如肉体生病腐化让人活得没有价值一样，灵魂的腐化堕落也让人活得没有意义。但是这不能成为一个论据。我们承认健康本身就是值得期望的一种状态，疾病是令人厌恶的一种状态，但对于正义就是灵魂的健康而不义就是灵魂的疾病这样的关键论断，需要的是论证而不仅仅是提出观点而已。

柏拉图在《高尔吉亚篇》里面作了一些论证，但还不够充分。在这篇对话中，为了反驳波卢斯，苏格拉底提出，那些成功的暴君就是公认的最为不仁不义之徒，他们并没有像波卢斯断言的那样得到对他们最好的生活。相反他们永远也得不到真正想要的东西，因为他们想要的就是对其最好的东西，但不义只会对自己有百害而无一利。之所以这么说是源于波卢斯承认，只给自己带来好处的不义行为是可耻的行为。苏格拉底同意波卢斯的观点，并由此引申出了这样一个原则：不义的行为之所以可耻是因为它要么令人不快，要么给人带来危害。显然，不义的行为不会使人不快；因此按照上面的假定，不义的行为就必然给人带来危害。那么，不义的举动对于行为者来说便是有害而无益。这个论点有许多站不住脚的地方，其中最重要的问题是它忽视了这些道德概念的相对性。为了使人可以接受，第一个假定应该解读为“对某人来说，任何可耻的行为要么使某人感到不快，要么给某人带来伤害”。从这个假定显然不能推论说，

因为不义不会让不义之人感到不快，所以它就必定会给不义之人带来伤害；它也可能是给别人带来伤害，这就是不义对不义之人来说也是可耻的理由。（我们之所以认为不义对作恶者来说也是可耻的，就是因为它会给别人带来伤害）。在后面的对话中（503e-504d），苏格拉底为了反驳卡里克勒斯而提出，既然任何一种事物的德性（比如一艘船或者一栋房子）取决于它合适的组成比例及其排列形式，那么身体和灵魂的德性也必须依赖于它们组成的恰当比例和排列顺序。对于身体来说就是健康，对于灵魂来说就是正义和自制。《克力同篇》曾经对健康和德性的并行论有过简单的说明，在这里已经上升到了一般原则，即德性取决于事物的组成形式，但是这个原则还不足以建立起健康和德性的并行论。因为事物具有的恰当组成形式是由该事物特定功能决定的。比如说一艘船的功能就是在水上安全省力地运载乘客和货物，我们要由此种功能来判断这艘船的构造是否良好。所以为了知道怎样才能使我们心理的组成部分，如思维能力和身体欲望，达到最佳的组合状态，我们首先需要知道我们的人生目标应该是什么。有些人生目标可通过传统道德来确立最佳的组合形式，但有些人的人生目标就要求一种完全不同的组合形式。比如，传奇人物唐璜（Don Juan）或者印象派画家高更（Gauguin）可能会认为，能够最大限度地实现自我表达的组合形式才是最佳的组合形式。

德性即知识的学说是理解苏格拉底在《普罗泰戈拉篇》中强调的整体德性论的关键所在。在这篇对话中，普罗泰戈拉采纳了一种非常传统的德性概念。他认为德性就是由一组彼此不同的品质组成的，就像我们的身体是由不同的感官组成的一样。人的行为要恰当，就必须协调好这些不同的品质。但一个人可能具有某些品质而同时又缺乏其他一些品质。比如，最容易看到的是，一个人可能表现得非常勇敢，但是在其他品质方面又有着非常明显的缺陷（329d-e）。与此相反，苏格拉底提出，如

勇敢、自制等这些具体德性指的其实都是"同一事物，只不过名称不同罢了"(329c-d)。他后来在对话中又对如何理解整体的德性进行了说明。他强调，他一直"努力地表明，所有的品质，如正义、节制、勇敢等，都是知识"。说每一种德性都是知识的意思是，按照上面提到的动机理论，知道什么对行为者自身最好就足以保证他在生活的各个方面都可以正确行事。我们不应该把具体的德性看作是一种一般的德性知识中的不同种类。比如，把怜悯看作是宗教方面的知识，把勇敢看作是应对危险事情的知识，它们两个的性质完全不同，就像算术知识和几何知识都是数学知识，但却各不相同。因此，一个人可以只懂算术知识而不管几何知识。苏格拉底构想的是一种独一无二的综合性知识，这便是知道什么对行为者自身最好的知识，这种知识可以运用到生活的各个领域；在各个不同的领域中，它有不同的名称。比如勇敢就是使人在险境中临危不惧的一种德性，怜悯是使人在神面前举止得当的一种德性。上述各种不同的德性说的又都是同一个东西，那就是行为者对他或她自身福祉的领会。

有人反对说，苏格拉底的这种整体德性论与他的具体德性说是前后矛盾的，因为在《拉凯篇》和《美诺篇》里，他把具体德性看作是整体德性的组成部分。确实，在《拉凯篇》里面，苏格拉底把勇敢定义为对可怕之事的知识（194e-195a），但这种定义被否定了。因为如果这种定义说得通的话，勇敢也可以被定义成是对什么是好和什么是坏的知识。但是这样勇敢就与作为整体的德性等同起来了，而开始的假设是勇敢不是德性的全部而只是德性的一部分（198a-199e）。考虑到这篇对话陷入了自相矛盾之中，我们弄不清楚柏拉图当时在写这篇对话的时候，他自己是否认为勇敢作为整体德性的定义和勇敢作为德性一个组成部分的定义是相互矛盾的。如果说他已经看到了这个矛盾，我们不知道，他是否清楚应该舍弃哪种定义。我们完全可

以想象得到，柏拉图自己并不认为它们是相互矛盾的，而且在他看来，读者也应该看到，用不着否定其中的任何一种定义。在柏拉图看来，只要对部分德性论稍作解释他便可以和整体德性论统一起来。简单地说，整体的德性遍布生活的全部领域，而作为具体德性的“勇敢”和“怜悯”等并不是德性的全面应用，而只是德性在一个特定领域中的应用。比如近海航行学与远洋航行学并不是两种学科，它们都属于航行学，只是应用的范围有所不同。它们是航行学的组成部分，必须同时掌握它们才能胜任航行的工作。

正如我们已经看到的，德性即知识的理论在其核心论点上存在着漏洞。德性始终是对行为者有利的这个核心论点竟然在苏格拉底的对话中并没有给予任何的证明，而且更严重的问题是，这个论点的前后有矛盾。当我们问“德性是关于什么的知识？”的时候，这个论点的矛盾就会呈现出来。在《美诺篇》和《普罗泰戈拉篇》里面，苏格拉底回答说，德性是关于行为者幸福的知识，按照追求幸福是人固有动机的假定，如果一个人坚持追求自己的幸福，他就必须具备有关幸福的知识，因为这种知识可以保证他生活美满。然而，行为者自身的幸福与保证他最终获得幸福的知识是有区别的。“德性是有关行为者幸福的知识”就好比说“医学是有关健康的知识”。以这个类比来说，德性作为保证人们获得幸福的知识，其价值就纯粹是工具性的，这如同医学的价值也是纯工具性的一样，它只是从保证获得幸福这一内在价值中派生出来的。我们都知道，苏格拉底将德性视为本身就有价值的东西而不仅仅是有工具性的价值，他并没有将德性比作医学，而把德性看成是健康本身。因此，德性不是为了达至我们指明的、并称之为幸福的生活状态而采用的手段；其实德性就是这种幸福的组成部分（有关苏格拉底伦理学最棘手的问题之一就是要弄清楚，苏格拉底是否还承认有其他的组成部分）。所以说德性是值得追求的，并不是因为它是为了过一种有意义的生活（即过上一种幸福生活）而采取

的一种手段，恰恰相反，生活之所以值得过，那完全或者主要是因为那是一种富有德性的生活。

显然，德性理论的前后矛盾在于，苏格拉底既主张德性是有关什么是行为者幸福的知识又强调德性就是幸福本身这两个彼此矛盾的观点。当然，我们可以说德性是有关什么是行为者幸福的知识，而行为者的幸福就是知识。但是，假如这样的话，作为行为者幸福的知识就必须与有关什么是行为者幸福的知识区分开来。否则我们会遇到这样的情形：有了什么是幸福的知识就等于有了幸福，幸福就是对什么是幸福的认识，反过来说，这种认识（即什么是幸福的认识）就是幸福，而幸福就是关于什么是幸福的知识，如此这般推下去以至于无穷。所以，如果苏格拉底想要坚持德性即知识的论断，他就要么指明，这种知识并不是有关个人幸福的知识，要么放弃德性就是个人幸福的观点。

按照柏拉图在《欧谛德谟篇》里的描写，苏格拉底一直在努力解决这个问题。这篇对话表现了两种哲学思想的交锋，一种以苏格拉底为代表，另一种以智者欧谛德谟和狄奥尼索多罗（Dionysodorus）两兄弟为代表。两个智者凭借一种令人眼花缭乱的诡辩技巧来阐述他们的思想，这种诡辩技巧使得他们特别地"好辩论，而且还能够驳倒任何人的观点，无论这种观点是对还是错"（272a-b）。对于苏格拉底来说，他试图论证智慧在实现幸福生活中的核心作用。在他辩论的第一部分(278e-281e)，他认为德性即知识，这个论点与《美诺篇》（87d-89a）里面所提出的论点完全一样；只有知识或智慧（它们是可以互换的）是无条件地好，因为其他所有的好东西如物质财富或者人格魅力，只有运用得当才会给行为者带来好处，而将这些好东西运用得当又要全凭智慧的指导。就这个部分的辩论而言，苏格拉底还是在重复《美诺篇》里面的论点，但是他在第二部分的辩论（288d-292e）超越了以前的论点。他在这里指出，以前的辩

论表明，那种可以为行为者带来最大幸福的技艺是能够协调和运用所有从属利益的技艺，而且还包括了所有其他技艺的成果。这种技艺显然就是一种起着指导或者支配作用的技艺，可以称之为是政治的或者君主式的技艺。但现在的问题是，君主式技艺追求的目标是什么呢？这种技艺不是给民众直接提供诸如财富或者自由之类的好处，因为以前的辩论已经表明，这些东西只有受智慧指导才谈得上是幸福的。这样君主式技艺的目标只能是使民众有智慧。但这是什么样的智慧呢？当然不是做鞋子或者建房子的那种智慧（这等于是技能），因为这些也必须接受某种最高技能的指导。所以君主式技艺的目标不是别的，正是使民众也具备一种君主式的技艺。但正如苏格拉底所承认的（292d-e）那样，这个认识并没有给我们带来什么东西，因为我们对什么是君主式的技艺还缺乏一个明确的概念。

苏格拉底给我们留下了一个未解的难题。柏拉图也没有看出苏格拉底有什么解决的办法来。这篇对话表明，柏拉图已经意识了苏格拉底伦理学体系中两个重要原则的矛盾，即德性即知识（关于人的幸福的知识）和德性即幸福之间的矛盾。如果人的幸福可以等同于知识和德性的话，那知识的对象就不是这种知识本身。柏拉图最后的解决办法就是提出（在《理想国》里面），人的幸福是一种人格状态，在这种状态中，人的非理性冲动受到理智的支配，而理智又是由知识训练出来的，这种知识不是关于人的幸福的知识，而是关于善本身的知识，它是一种普遍的理性原则。柏拉图的这个思想包含以下3方面的内容：（1）人的幸福是德性；（2）德性不等同于知识，而是受到知识的指导；（3）这里所说的知识是关于普遍的善的知识。我们在《欧谛德谟篇》里面可以看到一个明显的变化，这就是苏格拉底在《美诺篇》里面明确提出的观点逐渐发展到柏拉图自己的观点。

柏拉图在《普罗泰戈拉篇》里也在试图解开这个难题，因为苏格拉底在对话中提出了一种幸福理论，其中心论点是：(1) 德性是关于人的幸福的知识[1]；(2) 人的幸福是一种最快乐的生活。这个理论的意义不在于苏格拉底自己是否接受了，或是仅仅为了普通民众和普罗泰戈拉能够接受而提出了它。它的意义在于打破了阻碍苏格拉底理论发展的僵局，虽然柏拉图自己不一定会接受这种理论。在尝试了这种坚持德性与知识的同一性而放弃德性与幸福的同一性的理论后，柏拉图选择了《欧谛德谟》的立场，即坚持德性与人的幸福的同一性，而不是与知识的同一性。

苏格拉底和智者

在柏拉图的辩护计划中，苏格拉底与智者的交锋显得尤为重要。正如我们所看到的，苏格拉底与智者在当时被视为是一路货色，所以柏拉图的辩护就是要表明，苏格拉底和智者的行为有着天壤之别。柏拉图把苏格拉底描写成哲学家的典范，因此，从抽象地意义上看，苏格拉底与智者的交锋代表了一种真哲学与假哲学之间的交锋。

柏拉图在其篇幅最长、最富戏剧性的《高尔吉亚篇》、《普罗泰戈拉篇》和《欧谛德谟篇》等3篇对话中描述了苏格拉底与智者及其弟子的思想交锋。我将连同《理想国》第一卷的内容对上述3篇对话一起进行考察。从作品本身看，《理想国》第一卷或许曾经是一篇单独的对话；即便不是这样，它也可以使我们看到柏拉图早期对话作品中那种质疑和反诘的辩论风格，其实《高尔吉亚篇》里的卡里克勒斯和《理想国》里的色

---

[1]也见《美诺篇》。

拉西马科斯的观点是比较一致的。除了这些主要的戏剧性对话作品之外，苏格拉底在两部“希比阿篇”的对话中也与智者展开了一对一的辩论。

智者在古希腊语中叫作“*sophistes*”（源自形容词 *sophos*，是“有智慧”和“有学问”的意思），原来是指“专家”或者“圣贤”。著名的希腊“七贤”[1]也被称为“七智者”。在公元前5世纪，智者是指那些像在苏格拉底对话中的普罗泰戈拉和希比阿那样四处讲学的知识分子。我们在前面看到，智者在某些地方被看作是危险的破坏分子，他们通过自然科学和诡辩技巧来颠覆传统的宗教和道德。与其他人不同，柏拉图对智者的描写更加细致精确。在智者的思想中确实有颠覆传统的内容，如卡里克勒斯和色拉西马科斯就猛烈地攻击传统道德。在诡辩中，欧谛德谟和狄奥尼索多罗厚颜无耻地蓄意哄骗对手。但是，柏拉图并没有把智者这个阶层描写成为道德的颠覆者或是假冒的辩论者，更不用说把这两个恶名都加在智者头上。《普罗泰戈拉篇》中的智者向人们传授生活的技艺，但这种生活技艺并不否定传统的社会道德，反而是在延续传统社会的道德，因为他是在为传统的教育内容拾遗补缺。他通过一个故事说明，社会道德是一个自然而然的发展结果，一个人生活在一个敌对的世界中，就必须要与社会合作，必须要一种道德。他以此来为传统道德辩护，并说明基本社会道德的重要性，特别是正义和自制的重要性。他对自己观点的论证是比较合理的，在某些地方还很有说服力。有趣的是，柏拉图根本没有提到智者以弱胜强的诡辩术，以及他们关于神灵的存在论和本质的不可知论。智者普罗狄库斯也出现在《普罗泰戈拉篇》里面，他在柏拉图的其他对

[1] 根据不同记载，被称为希腊“七贤”的共有22人之多，但提到比较多的是泰勒斯（Thales）、梭伦（Solon）、比亚斯（Bias）、庇塔库斯（Pittacus）和基伦（Chilon）等人。——译注

话中也经常被提到。据说，他对宗教的起源做出了自然主解释，所以被某些古代学者视为无神论者。柏拉图在这个中没有提到这些，只是取笑了他咬文嚼字的怪癖。在《普戈拉篇》和《大（小）希比阿篇》的对话中，希比阿被描为一个博学者，他的兴趣广泛，科学、天文学、历史学、批评和记忆术无所不包。在《大希比阿篇》中，他并没有出有什么辩才，柏拉图也没有提到他有什么激进的观点。吉亚一出场就提出，作为他专长的修辞术（也译为雄辩术一门无涉价值观的学科（455a），但是在苏格拉底的诱导他也不得不承认，一个优秀的演说家必须知道什么是正义义。如果他的学生们还不知道这一点，他可以再教他们（46当然，他在对话中并没有对正义和非正义作出实质性的说而且这个对话也没有提到，卡里克勒斯是从高尔吉亚那儿非道德主义的。如果说高尔吉亚对卡里克勒斯有什么影响的那就是他在表达自己那些惊世骇俗的观点时所充分体现出雄辩力量，这可能更符合高尔吉亚的实际情况。在柏拉图看这种影响和强行灌输一样危险。

这里值得指出的是，就像他对智者学说的描述一样，图对智者品性的描写也很细致。至少他没有总怀着敌意来智者的形象。色拉西马科斯确实令人生厌：高傲、粗鲁、放肆甚至告诉苏格拉底，他让照料他生活的人为他擦鼻涕）（34希比阿是一个博学又自负的笨蛋，但柏拉图对其他智者的要更加温和一些。比如，《欧谛德谟篇》中的那两兄弟的如此明显，一眼就能被人识破，以至于他俩儿看上去都有人喜欢了。而普洛狄库斯则是个有点滑稽的人物。普罗泰是一个受到更多关注的人物，他确实有些自命不凡和骄傲自当他被苏格拉底问住的时候，他会变得非常恼怒，但很快平静下来，爽快地承认自己的无知，即使是有那么一点屈就的样子，他还是对苏格拉底表示了自己的敬意。更重要的

图把他看作是一个必须从思想上认真对待的人物。他为捍会道德和他的教育者身份所作的发言，都是柏拉图的严肃。在同苏格拉底辩论的时候，他始终能坚持己见。当我们看《泰阿泰德篇》里面对他学说的长篇批判（这种情况没生在其他智者身上），我们就可以看得很清楚，柏拉图确重视他。

柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底，对智者非正统的宗教观并不感兴后来在《法律篇》第十卷里面，柏拉图提出强有力的理由，无神论会导致不道德的行为，他建议用国家的手段来禁神论的传播——包括动用死刑来惩处那些信奉无神论的——但柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底是不会持这种态度的）。他面严峻挑战来自智者色拉西马科斯和高尔吉亚的伙伴卡里克所代表的智者派的道德思维方式。卡里克勒斯比较明确而西马科斯比较含蓄地表达了他们的一种思想，其基本内容将自然的东西和习俗的东西区别开来。他们断定，人性都私的，同其他动物一样，人也有寻求最大自我满足的自然。他们由此得出结论说，每个人的幸福生活就是能够无限满足自己的自然冲动。在他们的眼里，法律和道德都是为制人们的自然冲动而采取的一些社会措施，其目的是为了一些人的幸福，其作用就是强迫人们牺牲自己的幸福来保他一些人的幸福。但是，因为每个人都有充分的理由将他己的幸福置于他人的幸福之上，所以每个人理性的选择就自己摆脱法律和道德的束缚。（卡里克勒斯还进一步强调，仅仅是理性的行为，而且在现实生活中还是正确或正义的，因为只要个人有力量使他人为自己服务，他就有权利这，法律或道德的错误就在于试图阻止人们这么做。）

前一章勾勒的苏格拉底的道德理论是对智者挑战的一种回尽管这种回应还缺少应有的说服力，因为苏格拉底还没有德和行为者的幸福有效地联系起来。但是除了这种彻底挑

战传统道德的观点之外，智者派的思想里面也有维护传统道德的声音，从而能够回应他们自己提出的这一挑战。如普罗泰戈拉在对话中（见《普罗泰戈拉篇》）就提出了道德的社会起源论。这种理论反对那种把自然和习俗截然对立起来的主张。相反，它强调以社会道德形式出现的习俗本身就是自然的产物，因为这些行为准则是自然而然地产生，是人类为了生存去适应外界环境的结果（社会就是由此而形成的）。其实习俗并没有妨碍人性的发展，相反，只有通过习俗的作用，人性才能随着文明的发展而得以延续和发展。

因为普罗泰戈拉赞成传统道德，尤其是正义和自制的道德，这样他就加入到了反对卡里克勒斯和色拉西马科斯的阵营中。尽管这样，苏格拉底还是找出了他理论上的漏洞。虽然苏格拉底没有明确说出来，但还是暗示了，普罗泰戈拉把正义和自制仅仅看作是有工具性的价值而不是有内在的价值；在他看来，正义和自制的价值仅仅在于它们是为公共生活谋福利的必要前提，并不是要求人们时时处处都遵守这些道德规范，只要人们大体上能遵守就行了。因此在特定的情况下，只要既不危及社会秩序又不用受罚，那偶尔做点坏事也未尝不可。（这是一个“搭便车”的问题）。这个问题在《理想国》第二卷里面有过相关的讨论。在《普罗泰戈拉篇》里面，苏格拉底批评普罗泰戈拉把具体德性与整体德性割裂开来（见前面的相关论述），其实是没有抓住德性的实质，所以他称自己是德性问题的专家（换言之，他可以教授政治的技艺，319a）是骗人的。像希波克拉底等人都去请教他德性方面的知识，这不仅浪费了他们的时间和金钱，而且还可能会得到错误的德性观和人生价值观（312b-314b）。

智者是一些危险人物，但不是像大众讽刺挖苦的那样。他们是一种威胁，但主要不是因为他们宣扬无神论或不道德的行为（即使有些智者确实在传播无神论或是反道德的观点），而

是因为他们把自己装扮成是专家，能够回答“一个人应该怎样活着？”这样一个至关重要的问题，但实际上他们并没有回答这个问题需要的知识。这是一个在苏格拉底与智者交锋中反复出现的主题。普罗泰戈拉声称，他可以教会人们如何去获得德性，但事实证明他根本不知道什么是德性。欧谛德谟和狄奥尼索多罗也断言可以教授德性（275a），但实际上他们教授的只是修辞技巧。（按照柏拉图的描写，普罗泰戈拉对他自己的主张坚信不疑，但对话中的兄弟二人就很难说了。智者是否相信他所说的东西并不重要，重要的是其主张没有什么事实根据）。希比阿自称他什么都懂，包括作为德性组成部分的美和高尚的本质，但事实证明，他和其他的智者一样，都只是徒有其名罢了。相反，苏格拉底一般不自称是专家。他所要表达的是对哲学任务的真正把握，是寻求真正的生活技艺；要获得这种技艺就要真正懂得什么是善，什么是正确的人生目标。

在《高尔吉亚篇》里面，通过与修辞术进行对比，苏格拉底强调了自己的这种哲学主张。生活的技艺旨在寻求德性，需要知道德性是什么，而修辞术仅仅是为了满足人们的欲望，这些人并不知道欲望满足的结果是好是坏。因此生活技艺的真正专家是以苏格拉底为代表的哲学家。苏格拉底在这篇对话中出人意料地声称，他拥有生活技艺的专业知识。如果人们的生活没有哲学的指导，而只受修辞术左右，那么结果就是用对快乐的追求代替对德性的追求，接着就可能出现卡里克勒斯那样的道德混乱。在卡里克勒斯看来，德性就是毫无顾忌地追欢逐乐。同其他智者不同，高尔吉亚似乎没有断言他能够传授德性。这样苏格拉底在这篇对话中批评的不是智者对专业知识的占有，而是一种错误的做法。这种做法主张通过说服技巧而不是通过哲学探究来确立基本的价值观（在柏拉图看来，最典型的就是雅典的民主政治）。

第五章
苏格拉底对后世哲学的影响

古代哲学

从现代的观点来看，苏格拉底最为重要的思想遗产就是他对柏拉图的影响。但是我们已经看到，苏格拉底死后，他的许多亲朋好友都曾撰文著书纪念他，他们在不同程度上也都受到苏格拉底的影响，而柏拉图只是其中之一。在这个部分，我将简要地追述一下，后代人是如何通过与柏拉图的私交或是柏拉图本人和他人的著作而受到苏格拉底的影响。

我们首先从与苏格拉底有过个人接触的两个人说起，他们是安提西尼和亚里斯提卜。据说，安提西尼原是高尔吉亚的学生，他后来转而拥戴苏格拉底。他看起来像是一个传统的智者，写过大量不同主题的作品，其中许多主题与只关注伦理学的苏格拉底的兴趣相距甚远。他感兴趣的是语言的本质以及语言与现实的关系问题，他尤其否认矛盾存在的可能性，这就很像反对苏格拉底的两位智者，普罗狄库斯和普罗泰戈拉的观点。据说这两位智者也否认矛盾存在的可能。安提西尼似乎是一个在思想上兼收并蓄的人物，苏格拉底对他的影响主要表现在他坚持苏格拉底的一些伦理主张，并且将其运用到他的苦行生活之

中。安提西尼认为德性不仅可传授，而且还能够给人以幸福。除此之外，他还补充了一个重要的观点，即“我们需要的正是苏格拉底的力量”[1]。苏格拉底否认可能存在那种违背自己理智判断的行为。人仅仅拥有德性知识还不足以保证他去追求德性，他还必须获得足够的力量来遵守他或她的理智判断，这就是意味着，光有理智判断还不够，还需要克服欲望带来的干扰。（柏拉图在《理想国》429c也做了类似的修改，他将勇敢定义为“能够在各种快乐、欲望、恐惧的影响下，坚持由法律和教育所灌输的信念，能够分清什么是最坏的和什么是最好的”。）苏格拉底的力量要由一种苦行的生活方式来发扬，这种生活方式要求回避所有的快乐，当然除了那些对苦行生活有益的快乐。显然，苏格拉底的生活方式也同他的学说一样，对安提西尼产生了重要的影响。后来，极端的苦行生活就成为了犬儒学派的标志，这个学派拒绝接受通常的社会生活习惯，以此来表达他们的核心信条，即善的生活就是顺应自然的生活。据说安提西尼后来成为了犬儒学派的创始人。没有证据表明苏格拉底在思想或组织形式影响方面了安提西尼，但苏格拉底的生活方式却为后人所继承。正如第欧根尼·拉尔修明确记述的那样（6.2）：安提西尼“继承他的（即苏格拉底）忍耐力，学习他不受情绪影响，由此成了犬儒主义的创始人”[1]。

亚里斯提卜的家乡在北非的昔兰尼加，他因为仰慕苏格拉底而来到雅典。他也写过题材众多的作品，其中有伦理学、语

[1] 第欧根尼·拉尔修6.10-11。

[2] 犬儒主义（Cynics，也称犬儒学派），是流行于公元前4世纪到基督教时期的一个古代哲学派别，以愤世嫉俗和悲观怀疑而著称。其创始人是苏格拉底的弟子安提西尼，第欧根尼则是这个学派最典型的代表人物，他用自己的行为挑战社会常规道德，倡导一种回归自然的生活方式，平时睡在露天的巨大陶管里，声称要像狗那样生活。这个学派与其他古代哲学派别相比较，它的社会影响主要在于它与众不同的生活方式而不是它的思想体系。——译注



图8. 拉斐尔壁画《雅典学院》（创作于1508至1511年）的局部。该壁画描绘了古希腊那些最著名的思想家。柏拉图和亚里士多德站在中间。苏格拉底站在他们的左边，正在向一群旁观者发表演说。

言理论和历史。据说，他是苏格拉底弟子中第一个学智者向学生收学费的人。他被看作是昔兰尼学派的创始人，这个学派在公元前 4 世纪到 3 世纪比较有影响。但由于我们无法确定这个学派创立的年代，所以我们没有可靠的证据来确定这个学派的哪些学说是由亚里斯提卜本人提出来的。在伦理思想方面，该学派主张，当下的感官快乐才是至善；在认识论方面主张，我们只能认识当下的感官印象。这后一种主张明显带有怀疑论倾向。正是这一倾向使昔兰尼学派在伦理学和认识论方面的主张统一起来。根据怀疑论的观点，过去和将来都是无法理解的，因此只有面对当下的经验才是理性的选择；所有生物都趋乐避苦，所以极时行乐才是合理的主张。在古希腊哲学家中间，唯有这个学派从这种怀疑论的角度否认幸福是至善；因为要得到幸福就要把生活看成是一个整体，但这是不可能的，因为除了当下我们什么也不知道。所以，聪明人的生活目标就不是什么幸福而是及时行乐。

从这些思想中间，我们看不到什么苏格拉底的影响。这个及时行乐才是至善的主张，更接近卡里克勒斯的观点，而不是苏格拉底的观点。虽然后来有一些怀疑论者宣称苏格拉底是他们的鼻祖，但这并不是因为苏格拉底说过，唯有当下的感官印象才是可以认识的。这个观点其实是由普罗泰戈拉提出的，在《泰阿泰德篇》里面曾遭到过苏格拉底的批评。另一方面，从欧西比乌斯（Eusebius）记录的一些亚里斯提卜的观点来看，亚里斯提卜的有些思想还是比较接近苏格拉底的。比如说，他认为快乐是值得追求的，但不是无条件的，也不能没有节制。这种节制来自教育，来自自我认识，来自学习，来自一种忍耐力（忍耐力是安提西尼苦行主义道德的一个关键词。）我们可以说是这个学派在亚里斯提卜死后，在一个怀疑主义盛行的时代发展了他的观点，提出了及时行乐是至善的主张。

绝大多数的古代文献都表明，亚里斯提卜喜欢奢华的生活，在色诺芬的《回忆苏格拉底》里面就有相关的记载。色诺芬写道，苏格拉底曾用普罗狄库斯关于“赫拉克勒斯的选择”这一寓言[1]来告诫亚里斯提卜（2.1）。这个寓言的寓意完全是安提西尼式的观点，即认为简单和辛劳的生活从长远来看比奢华的生活更能够带来快乐。这个观点强调的是长远的考虑，亚里斯提卜似乎没有在理论上拒绝这个观点。我们可以看到，安提西尼和亚里斯提卜之间的差别不是体现在思想上的截然对立，而是表现为一种性情上的大相径庭。安提西尼受到苏格拉底苦行生活方式的影响，他将这种苦行生活方式上升到道德理想的高度，而亚里斯提卜则认为，苏格拉底提出的自我认识和自我节制的思想与一种随遇而安的生活方式是相通的。亚里斯提卜对苏格拉底的理解让我们想到了苏格拉底确有不那么刻板的一面。例如，他特别喜欢美食和豪饮[2]，以及他出了名的好色。有些人认为，苏格拉底在《普罗泰戈拉篇》里面表现出来的享乐主义倾向代表了他真实的观点。上面提到的古代文献就有记载说，苏格拉底也主张人生的最高目标就是及时行乐。最引人注目的是苏格拉底的形象如此复杂多变，以至于像安提西尼和亚里斯提卜代表的两种迥然不同的生活方式都可以在某种程度被看做是苏格拉底式的（奥古斯丁[3]在《上帝之城》中对此有过评论，见8.3节）。

由于安提西尼的关系，苏格拉底与犬儒学派有了一定的

[1] 赫拉克勒斯（Heracles 或 Herculean），希腊罗马神话中的大力神和英雄，是天神宙斯和凡人女子阿尔克墨涅所生的儿子。他力大无比，但受到宙斯妻子赫拉的报复和迫害，作为欧律斯特斯的奴仆去完成12件苦役而名闻天下。——译注

[2] 见柏拉图《会饮篇》220a。

[3] 奥古斯丁（Augustine，354—430），公认的古代基督教最伟大的思想家。他将基督教信仰与柏拉图的哲学结合起来，代表作有《忏悔录》和《上帝之城》。——译注

联系，以后又被认为是斯多葛学派[1]的思想前辈，因为斯多葛学派自认为是犬儒学派和苏格拉底思想的继承人。按照希腊历史学家的描述（在狄奥根尼·拉尔修的作品中是依照生活年代的顺序进行记录的），这两个学派领袖的传承关系是这样的：经过斯洛普的第欧根尼[2]和来自底比斯的克拉特斯[3]的发扬光大，犬儒学派领袖的位置由安提西尼传到了来自西提乌姆的斯多葛学派创始人芝诺（Zeno）手中。据说芝诺在去拜访雅典的途中，读了色诺芬的《回忆苏格拉底》，之后便决定投身哲学。他四处打听在哪里能够找到像苏格拉底那样的人，最后有人建议他去认识克拉特斯。作为犬儒学派的后继者，斯多葛学派继承了顺其自然的生活就是人类最大幸福这一主要观点。然而，斯多葛学派是借助苏格拉底而不是犬儒学派来阐述其自然主义幸福观的。对于斯多葛学派来说，顺其自然的生活适合于所有生物，因为这种生活遵循了整个自然界的完美秩序。人是理性的动物，对于人来说，顺其自然的生活也是符合理性要求的生活。在人的灵魂中，并不存在理性因素和非理性因素的划分，也不存在道德和理性的划分。事实上，斯多葛学派完全接受了苏格拉底伦理学的基本主张，他们也同样认为德性即知识，德性是实现幸福的充分条件。在《美诺篇》和《欧谛德谟篇》里面，苏格拉底提出德性（等于知识）是唯一的无条件的善，这个主张被斯多葛学派解释成德性是唯一的善，其他所有的东西，

[1] 斯多葛学派（Stoics），古希腊罗马时期一个重要的哲学派别，它公认的创始人是西提乌姆的芝诺。它强调知觉是真知的基础，相信德性是世界的内在规定，主张哲学探究的目的是为人们提供一种以心灵平静为原则的生活方式。——译注

[2] 他被形容为是一个"发了疯的苏格拉底"，见第欧根尼·拉尔修 6.54。

[3] 克拉特斯（Crates），来自底比斯，大约生活在公元前4世纪后期，是犬儒学派哲学家第欧根尼的学生。他放弃财产而追求矫正世上罪恶的事业。他以写作哲学戏剧和哲学书信而为人称道，其历史的重要性在于他对斯多葛派创始人芝诺的影响。——译注

不管好或是坏，都是无关紧要的。阿里斯托（Aristo）是芝诺的一个追随者，他坚持苏格拉底的德性统一论思想，并解释说，不同的德性有不同的名称是为了描述有关善恶的不同知识，不同德性的划分只是为了应对不同的现实情况。

我们看到，斯多葛学派所坚持的德性即（善的）知识和德性是唯一善的两个主张都曾使苏格拉底在伦理学上走进了死胡同。批评者们毫不迟疑地断言，斯多葛学派也走进了同样的死胡同：普鲁塔克[1]断言，当被问到什么是善的时候，斯多葛派肯定回答“善就是智慧”，当被问到什么是智慧的时候，他们肯定会回答“智慧就是善”。他们的回答直接引证了《欧谛德谟篇》中的相关段落（292e）。苏格拉底在理论上陷入困境，最先就是在这些段落里反映出来的。但是斯多葛学派找到了走出这个困境的办法，这就是他们有关人的德性与自然的完美秩序相一致的学说。人类的德性确实是有关德性的知识，但这种知识并不仅仅是有关人类德性的知识，即不是有关人类德性本身的知识。它是有关宇宙德性的知识，可以使心灵完全听从理性的召唤，从而达到与宇宙理性合一的境界。但是看起来，斯多葛学派似乎并没有彻底摆脱这个困境，因为理性的行为就是做出正确的选择，就是去选择好的东西而放弃坏的东西，如果不存在好与坏的区别而只有德性和背德的区别，那么我们最终还是无法认识清楚什么是德性。这个问题一直困扰着斯多葛学派，于是这个学派中的有些成员就试图找到一种解决办法，即在“无关紧要”的事情中间把健康这种“可取的无关紧要的事情”和疾病这种“不可取的无关紧要的事情”区别开来。无论是哪一种无关紧要的事情都不比另一种无关紧要的事情更好或是更坏，然而自然会促使我们去寻求可取的事情和避开不可取

[1] 见《道德论丛》1072b。

的事情，德性就在于遵循这些自然的推动力而去做出正确的选择。批评家们，如普鲁塔克[1]，就认为斯多葛学派玩的这个花招，其实是想鱼与熊掌都可兼得，因为他们不得不承认对于无关紧要事情的选择既是一件最值得关心的事情，同时又是一件最不值得关心的事情。斯多葛学派的矛盾引出了许多有趣的问题，这里无法再继续讨论了。

斯多葛学派认为，德性从属于宇宙的理性秩序，他们有这个思想就很难再声称自己师从于苏格拉底了。因为这个思想强调有关自然的知识优先于有关伦理的知识，但谁都知道，苏格拉底对自然哲学不感兴趣，他只对伦理学有兴趣[2]。可是他们能够从色诺芬的《回忆苏格拉底》中找到证据来说明，苏格拉底正是从思考自然的普遍问题中得出他的道德思想的。在这本书的1.4节，苏格拉底试图劝说无神论者阿里斯托德莫改变他的思想，提出从人体的精巧构造就可以证明神的存在以及神对人类的关照。在这个讨论中，苏格拉底提出人的智慧只是遍布世界的许多智慧中的一种，如同组成人体的自然成分只是整个自然组成成分中的一部分；接着他又说宇宙的智慧将一切都安排得合情合理、无可挑剔，神可以看到一切，听到一切，他无处不在，关照着一切的存在。苏格拉底的这个观点似乎预示了斯多葛学派后来的宇宙观，这就是把宇宙看成是一个有神意的、有灵性的和有序的存在。西塞罗[3]和塞克斯都[4]都明确提到了色诺芬的这段记述，并将其作为斯多葛学派宇宙理性观的一个思想来源。(还有一个同样的论点出现在《回忆苏格拉底》4.3节处，苏格拉底特别提到人类具有的理性和语言就证明了神对

[1] 见《斯多葛学派的矛盾》1047-8。

[2] 见色诺芬的《回忆苏格拉底》1.116和亚里士多德的《形而上学》987^b1-2。

[3] 见《论精神的本质》2.6.18。

[4] 见《反杂学家》9.92-104。

人类的关照。)《回忆苏格拉底》中的另一段记述(4.4)明显地预示了斯多葛学派后来的理论主张,因为在这段记述中,苏格拉底和希比阿都认为确实存在着一些普遍的和不成文的道德法则,例如一个人应该崇拜神,应该尊敬父母,这些道德法则并不像某些社会的法律那样,只是人类习惯的产物,而是由神为人类所制定的,一旦违反就要受到惩罚。西塞罗的《论共和国》(3.33.)有类似的主张,并有详细的论述(西塞罗的论述与斯多葛派观点如此类似以至于人们怀疑西赛罗是不是在照搬他人思想)。

公元前1世纪伊璧鸠鲁学说的信奉者菲罗德穆(Philodemus)认为,斯多葛学派很希望被别人称为是苏格拉底的信徒,苏格拉底在这个学派的历史上一直是被当作一个圣贤的典范。他坦然赴死的态度就是一个有智慧的人在面对死亡时应该持有的态度。斯多葛派的自杀者,如有名的塞涅卡[1],就是像苏格拉底那样坦然赴死的。根据公元1世纪到2世纪的作家爱比克泰德(Epictetus)的观点,苏格拉底是最杰出的圣贤,他将苏格拉底的影响概括为,"虽然他已去世,但他在世时的言行同样会使世人受益,甚至带给人们更多的教诲"。[2]

古代的哲学怀疑主义有两个主要的思想传统,这就是皮浪派的怀疑主义和学园派的怀疑主义。皮浪学派的开山始祖要追溯到公元4世纪来自埃利斯的皮浪(Pyrrho of Elis),他像苏格拉底一样,没有写下任何东西,也是一个神秘人物。没有确定的证据表明,这个学派的信徒把苏格拉底也看作是一个怀疑主

[1] 塞涅卡(Seneca,大约公元前4—前65),古罗马哲学家、政治家、雄辩家和悲剧作家。公元65年,由于受到政敌指控参与政治阴谋而被勒令自尽。——译注

[2] 《谈话录》4.1.169。

义者。塞克斯都·恩披里柯的著作是我们了解皮浪学派怀疑主义的主要原始资料。在他的作品中。苏格拉底一直被列入到教条主义者的名单中。教条主义者就是那些坚持某些绝对的信条，反对怀疑主义者对于所有问题不作判断的立场。他仅仅有一次提到[1]苏格拉底没有作任何判断。这就是苏格拉底在《斐德罗篇》(230a)以讽刺的口吻说到，他非但没有一种自我认识，就连自己到底是人还是群氓都完全弄不清楚。对于学园派来说，情况就完全不一样。学园派是柏拉图自己创立的学派，在阿尔凯西劳（Arcesilaus）的领导下，该学派在其创立1个世纪之后就信奉了怀疑主义，并作为一个怀疑主义学派延续了两百多年。直到在阿斯卡隆的安条克（Antiochus of Ascalon）的领导下，该学派才改信教条主义。阿尔凯西劳声称，他信奉怀疑主义，但仍然忠于苏格拉底和柏拉图的精神，因为在他看来，这两位先辈的哲学实践本就是怀疑主义的而不是教条主义的。

西塞罗的作品也是我们主要的资料来源。他在其著作中指出，阿尔凯西劳把苏格拉底的辩论活动看作是仅仅为了批驳他人、攻击他人的活动；苏格拉底并没有自己的信条，他只是去质问和反驳别人的思想。在对话中，我们确实发现，苏格拉底在许多地方通过揭示对话者思想的前后矛盾而使他们陷入困境。阿尔凯西劳解释说，这个结果正好说明了苏格拉底持有怀疑主义的基本立场，即他认为感觉或思想都不能把握住任何确定的东西[2]。阿尔凯西劳认为苏格拉底的论点存在着悖论，因为苏格拉底说，他除了知道自己无知以外就什么也不知道[3]。他批评苏格拉底不应该断言，自己知道自己是无知的。

[1] 见《反杂学家》7.264。

[2] 见《论演说术》3.67和《论目的》2.2,5.10。

[3] 见《学园派》1.45, 2.74。

我们前面的论述已清楚地表明，阿尔凯西劳的阐释确实抓住了苏格拉底对话活动中的一些要点，只是这种阐释过于片面。苏格拉底承认自己无知，否认拥有智慧或专业知识，但他同时也声称：他从普通人的角度可以知道一些事情；有些人从专家角度也可以知道一些事情，这与他承认自己无知其实并不矛盾。他从来没有说过他是一无所知的，他也从来没有说过他是知道自己是无知的。他质问他人，但通常都得不到令人满意的结果，他并没有因此而得出一个普遍性的论点说，感觉或思想都不能把握住任何确定的东西。相反，苏格拉底认为知识与德性是同一的。质问的否定性结果可以刺激人们对问题的深入思考。当然，知识探索中的这种怀疑态度与怀疑主义是可以完全相容的。一个怀疑论者当然是一个探求者，在其不懈的知识探求中，他的怀疑论态度会使他不断地推翻自己的结论。但是，尽管怀疑论者强调要不断地去探求知识，但他们最终对人类的认识能力还是持一种悲观主义的态度。按照阿尔凯西劳的说法，“用思想或是感觉都不能抓住任何确定的东西”。怀疑主义者之所以有这种观点，并不仅仅因为，现目前为止，任何对知识的探求都没有得到确定的结果，还因为怀疑论者事先就相信，任何时候都会是这样的结果，而且还运用那些矛盾的事例或论据来证明他们的主张。但在柏拉图的描述中，苏格拉底身上就没有一点悲观主义的色彩。

当然后来的哲学家并不都认同苏格拉底的观点。一些亚里士多德的后继者就对苏格拉底持反对态度，特别出名的是阿里斯托依努斯，他就是说苏格拉底犯有重婚罪的始作俑者。这个说法当然遭到了斯多葛学派成员帕奈提乌（Panaetius）的反驳。对苏格拉底的攻击最不遗余力的要算是伊壁鸠鲁派的人。对于那些不属于自己学派的哲学家们恶言漫骂，是伊壁鸠鲁学派的一贯传统，对苏格拉底也不例外。连续几代伊壁鸠派信徒都对苏格拉底出言不逊。他们中间最有代表性的是普鲁塔克引证过

的克罗特斯（Colotes）的评论。这位伊壁鸠鲁主义者把卡厄里芬去求神谕的故事看作是一个“智者派蹩脚的谎言”[1]，他认为苏格拉底的辩论完全就是自吹自擂或者就是江湖骗术，因为他的言行从来都不一致[2]。伊壁鸠鲁学派将斯多葛学派和怀疑主义的学园派看作是职业上的竞争对手，他们之所以对苏格拉底怀有敌意似乎有部分原因在于这两个学派都很看重他。

其实不只是异教哲学家喜欢把苏格拉底看作是他们的思想先驱。公元 2 世纪基督教教义辩护文作者查斯丁[3]也以苏格拉底为例，来反驳有些人提出的基督徒有无神论思想的指控。他指出，像基督徒一样，苏格拉底也被指控有无神论倾向，因为苏格拉底拒绝承认奥林匹亚众神祇的神话而竭力主张崇拜一个唯一的真神。其实，苏格拉底已经对基督的启示有了一定的领会，因为尽管哲学家们掌握的真理有限，他们的思想有许多谬误矛盾之处，但“他们思想中的合理之处都属我们基督教徒所有”。

中世纪和近代哲学

尽管查斯丁如此明确地将苏格拉底基督教化，但他并不是将苏格拉底基督教化这一传统的始作俑者。虽然奥古斯丁受柏拉图的影响很大，他甚至认为柏拉图可能知道《旧约》，但他并不像查斯丁那样断定苏格拉底是赞同基督教的。有些基督教作家称赞苏格拉底是有德之人，因为受到不公正的对待才被判

[1] 见《反克罗特斯》116e-f。

[2] 见 1117d，这里克罗特斯大概想到了苏格拉底有时带着讽刺的口气在那里夸奖他的对话者。

[3] 查斯丁（Justin，约公元 100—165），基督教早期教父。他率先将基督教教义与希腊哲学结合起来，代表作有《第一护教文》和《与犹太人特里风谈话录》——。译注



图 9. 圣奥尔本斯的修士马修·帕里斯（卒于 1259 年）为一本名为《先师苏格拉底的预言》的算命书所画的扉页插图。两眼圆睁的“柏拉图”在口述他的思想，而“苏格拉底”在记录这些思想，这显然是把他们的名字弄颠倒了。这幅插图被印在德里达的著作《名信片》上。

处死刑，但大多数基督教作家都反对苏格拉底的“偶像崇拜”，不认同他所说的神示（按德尔图良[1]等人的解释，这个神示是由一个精灵传递的），向药神阿斯克勒庇俄斯的献祭以及他说的“像狗一样生活”的誓言等。柏拉图哲学传统的影响一至持续到中世纪早期，这一时期的人们主要关注柏拉图的晚期作品，特别是他的《蒂迈欧篇》。在这些晚期对话作品中，苏格拉底性格已无关紧要。从12世纪开始，柏拉图在西方世界的影响日渐消退，取而代之的是亚里士多德。中世纪主要的哲学家对苏格拉底都没有什么兴趣，一直到15世纪后期，随着柏拉图主义的复兴，人们才重新对苏格拉底产生了兴趣。作为新柏拉图主义者纲领的一个组成部分，柏拉图主义被解释成一种用寓言来表达的基督教真理。我们看到佛罗伦萨人马尔西利奥·菲奇洛（Marsilio Ficino）对苏格拉底和耶酥所遭受的审判和死刑作了一个详细比较，发现两者有许多相似之处。这一比较传统为伊拉斯谟（Erasumus，在他所写的人物对话中就有“圣哲苏格拉底，请为我们祈祷吧”这样的表白）所延续，他将接受死刑于监狱中的苏格拉底比作蒙难于格斯马尼花园的耶酥。（在随后的几个世纪中，这种比较始终没有中断，如18世纪的狄德罗［Diderot］和卢梭［Rousseau，当然还有其他人］以及19世纪的许多作家，他们所作的比较显然是为了配合他们自己特有的宗教信仰。）如同在古代世界一样，在近现代，苏格拉底的形象也被彼此对立的意识形态所利用。在16世纪的法国人蒙田(Montaigne)看来，苏格拉底不是一个耶酥式的人物，而是一个遵循自然德性和智慧的典范；对于古代人描述的苏格拉底的超自然力量，特别是他所说的神示，其实都可以用自然主

[1] 德尔图良（Tertullian，约公元160—220），基督教神学家。用拉丁语写作，使得拉丁语成为基督教会的基本语言和传播工具，代表作有《护教篇》等——。译注

义的术语来加以解释；神示或许就是一种直觉的、非理性的判断力，而这种判断力得自于他固有的智慧和德性。在 17 和 18 世纪，理性主义的宗教观发展起来，它拒绝神示的内容，反对因其解释的争议而引发的宗教狂热，因而那时的人把苏格拉底看作是死在宗教狂热者手中的理性宗教的殉难者。正是在这种思想背景下，伏尔泰（Voltaire）创作了一部关于苏格拉底之死的戏剧，自然神论者[1]（或称理神论者）约翰·托兰德（John Toland）为一个“苏格拉底兄弟会”制定了一套敬神的礼拜仪式，其中包括一篇祈祷文，他也采用伊拉斯谟的做法来祈求苏格拉底的保佑。

如同在古代世界一样，近现代也有反对苏格拉底的声音。有些作者批评苏格拉底的道德品行，说他有同性恋倾向，置自己的妻儿于不顾。包括伏尔泰在内的一些批评家都认为，苏格拉底的神示就是一种令人遗憾的迷信行为。18 世纪还出现了一批著作，自近代以来，第一次重申了古代的一个观点。这种观点认为苏格拉底受到指控是由于政治上的原因，他之所以被判死刑是因为他反对雅典的民主政体以及他与克里底亚和阿尔西比亚德斯之间的朋友关系。（这种解释方式一直延续到今天，例如斯东［I.F.Stone］那本很受欢迎的《苏格拉底的审判》就是这样解释的。）有些正统的基督教作家拒绝承认苏格拉底和耶稣之间的相似性，除了已经提到的指责苏格拉底迷信和不道德之外，他们还宣称，苏格拉底其实是因自杀而身亡的。

苏格拉底在异族文化中充满矛盾的遭遇也体现在了中世纪阿拉伯的文献中。除了柏拉图和亚里士多德之外，苏格拉底是阿拉伯学者提得最多的哲学家，不仅仅是阿拉伯的哲学家对苏格拉底感兴趣，就是阿拉伯的诗人、神学家、神秘主义者以

[1] 自然神论者（Deist），一种非正统的宗教信仰者，强调宗教知识可以通过理性的方式来获得，主张容忍不同宗教的教义和仪式，注重人生的道德修养。——译注

及其他学者对苏格拉底也很感兴趣。当然阿拉伯学者的这种兴趣并不是建立在对于古希腊相关文献的广泛了解的基础上。尽管他们都非常熟悉有关苏格拉底被判死刑的那些对话作品，特别是柏拉图的《斐多篇》和《克力同篇》，但是对柏拉图其他的对话作品却不甚了解，对其他相关的苏格拉底文献就更是闻所未闻。然而阿拉伯学者普遍对记录有苏格拉底言论的那些轶事录感兴趣，就像第欧根尼·拉尔修和其他传记和说教作家所记录下来的那些有关苏格拉底趣闻轶事。这种记录往往将苏格拉底描述成一个圣人，“七根智慧的栋梁”之一（即“七贤”之一），他是道德的楷模，美德的化身，智慧的源泉，通晓人世、时间和上帝。他一直被看作是维护一神教神学和新柏拉图主义的英雄，他之所以被判处死刑，正是因为他反对偶像崇拜，坚信唯一真神。这样他就被当作是伊斯兰教圣贤的先行者（正如在西方世界他被看作是第一个基督徒一样），他被描写成一个在伊斯兰教国家能像亚伯拉罕（Abraham）、耶酥，甚至穆罕默德（the Prophet）那样受到尊敬的人物。有些作品将他描写成一个苦行者，有时甚至说那个住在木桶里，让亚历山大大帝走开不要挡着他晒太阳的人就是苏格拉底。这明显将他与犬儒学派的信徒弄混淆了，尤其是第欧根尼。另外一些作品将他视为炼金术之父，或是逻辑学、数学和物理学的开创者。然而，如同在西方世界一样，有些正统的宗教信仰者出于宗教的理由对苏格拉底受到的这种普遍赞誉提出了质疑（例如生活在11和12世纪的伊斯兰教神学家加扎利［al-Ghazali］），他们认为苏格拉底是各种异端学说的始作俑者，是伊斯兰教的一大威胁，有人甚至说他是一个无神论者。

利用苏格拉底来迎合自己的先入之见，这一传统源远流长，经久不断。黑格尔（Hegel）、克尔凯戈尔（Kierkegaard）和尼采（Nietzsche）3位19世纪重要的哲学家，也是完全按照自己的先入之见来理解苏格拉底的。在首次发表于1805至1806年

间的《哲学史讲演录》中，黑格尔认为苏格拉底被判死刑是因两种合理的道德观之间的冲突而产生的一种悲剧性的结果，是世界精神辩证地上升到一个更高层次的必要阶段。在苏格拉底出现以前，雅典人都是自发地、不加思考地服从客观道德的要求。通过批判地考察人们的道德观念，苏格拉底将道德变成了某种个人的和值得反思的东西。这种新道德观要求每个人对其道德原则进行批判性的审视。然而由于苏格拉底未能对德性做出任何肯定的论述，使得这种批判性审视的后果仅仅破坏了客观道德的权威性。苏格拉底的批判性审视表明，客观道德所宣称的普遍道德法则往往会遇到特殊的情形，由于缺乏相应的标准，使得个人在一些特定情形下无法判断对错，而只好诉诸于自己的良知或内心启示。苏格拉底的内心启示就是他所谓的"神示"。

苏格拉底诉诸于他的内心启示，他事实上是在诉诸于一个高于集体道德感的权威，人们是不会接受他的诉求的：

雅典人民的精神本身、它的法则、它的整个生活，是建立在伦理上面，建立在宗教上面，建立在一种自在自为的、固定的、坚固的东西上面。苏格拉底现在把真理放在内在意识的决定里面；因此他与雅典人民所认为的公正和真理发生对立。因此他是有理由被控告的。[1]

这样，个人的良知与雅典国家之间的冲突便不可避免，因为两者都强调自己才是最高的道德权威。同时两者的冲突又是悲剧性的，因为两者都自有其道理：

真正的悲剧是两种公正的道德力量之间所发生的必然冲突；这就是苏格拉底个人遭遇到的命运。一种力量是自然道德的神圣公正性，其法律就是那种体现为本质的自由和崇高

[1] 译文引用和参考了贺麟和王太庆译的《哲学史讲演录》，商务印书馆，1960年，第二卷，90页。

的意志；我们可以称它是一种抽象的客观的自由。相反，另一种力量是意识的或者主观自由的神圣公正性：这是由善恶知识之树，也就是自行建立的理性结出的果实；它是所有相连时代的普遍原则。正是这两种力量在苏格拉底的生活和哲学中产生了冲突。[1]

这种情况之所以是悲剧性的是因为，雅典人民的集体道德和个人良知都对苏格拉底提出了合理、强制、但却是相互冲突的要求。唯一的解决办法就是等待人类发展到两者的要求趋于一致的这样一个阶段。像苏格拉底这样不遵守集体道德规范的人必将遭受挫折，但是这种挫折将导致“虚假个体性”所代表的世界精神的干预性活动的胜利：

个体性的虚假形式被剥去了，而且用的是强制的方式，是用刑罚来进行的。这个原则以后上升到了它的世界精神的形式。这个原则的真正方式是一种普遍的方式，正如它以后所采取的那样；其中的错误之处在于这个原则仅仅作为一个个人的所有物而出现。[2]

显然苏格拉底的审判起因于集体的合法要求（客观道德）和个人道德行为（主观道德）之间的冲突，它反过来也反映了人类发展的一个特定阶段。在这个特定的发展阶段，集体和个人是分离的，因而会发生相互的冲突。这个阶段将要被一个更高的发展阶段所超越，那时个人和集体以某种方式成为一体，但不是使一方屈从于另一方，也不是将个人完全溶入到集体中，而是发展出一个更高形式的个体性，这种个体性可以在集体中发挥其应有的作用。

---

[1] 见《哲学史讲演录》，贺麟、王太庆译，商务印书馆，1960年，第二卷，106页。

[2] 同上书，104页。

克尔凯戈尔在其早期作品《反讽的概念——关于苏格拉底的系列评论》中，详尽地讨论了苏格拉底的生平学说。这部作品是他于1841年提交给哥本哈根大学的硕士论文。在这之前，他刚刚与雷吉娜·奥尔森（Regine Olsen）解除了婚约，经历了一场人生的危机，（他的论文评阅人报告至今还保留在哥本哈根大学，这份报告有趣地描述了学院派人士与一个狂傲天才之间的对峙）。克尔凯戈尔对苏格拉底的理解完全是黑格尔式的：同黑格尔一样，他认为苏格拉底正处在世界精神向更高阶段发展的一个世界历史的转折点上，要实现突破，个体要就必须做出牺牲。"一个人可以被世界历史证明是对的，但他仍然得不到他那个时代的认可。因为他得不到认可，他就只能成为一个牺牲品；又因为他后来可以得到世界历史发展的认可，所以他又一定会获胜，也就是说他必须通过成为一个牺牲品来取胜"。[1]同黑格尔的主张一样，克尔凯戈尔也认为苏格拉底的作用就是将希腊人的道德观念引向一个更高的发展阶段；他独创的引导方式就是用反讽这个手段来推动这种道德观念的转变。传统的希腊精神已经失去了活力，它需要一种新的原则来清除过时的道德观念的所有偏见。这就是苏格拉底的作用，他使用的武器就是反讽：

反讽是一把剑，一把双刃剑，苏格拉底就像是一个复仇的天使向希腊人挥舞着他手中的剑……反讽完全是主观性的煽动，在苏格拉底身上反讽就是一种真正的有世界历史意识的激情。对于苏格拉底来说，一个旧过程结束了，一个新过程又开始了。他是最后一位古典时代的代表人物，但是他要服从于神灵的召唤去毁灭他身上的纯正性和完美性，以此来催毁古典主义。[1]

克尔凯戈尔并不认为反讽是假装的无知，或者是假装对别

[1] 此处及以下引文都是根据原书的英译本译出。见克尔凯戈尔：《反讽的概念——关于苏格拉底的系列评论》（普林斯顿，1989），260页。

人的遵从。严格按照字面意义来解释的话，“反讽”就是一种“无限的和绝对的否定性”，这里是借用了黑格尔的观点。这等于说在一个辨证的发展过程中，低级阶段的消失是为了迎接高级阶段的到来。克尔凯戈尔列举了犹太教被基督教所取代的事例，在这个过程中，施洗者约翰（John the Baptist）也发挥了同苏格拉底一样的“反讽”作用：“他（即约翰）让犹太教继续存在，同时又在其中播下了使其毁灭的种子”。[2] 但是在苏格拉底与施洗者约翰之间有着重要的区别，因为后者缺乏对他反讽行为的自觉意识：

因为反讽的形成需要不断地完善，它需要实施反讽的主体有反讽的意识，当他评判既定的现实存在的时候，他能够感到一种否定的自由，并且享受着这种否定的自由。[3]

苏格拉底感受到了否定的自由，他第一个将反讽展现为“一种主观性的特征”：

如果反讽是主观性的特征，它必须首先展现自身，让主观性出现在世界历史中。也就是说反讽是最初级的和最抽象的主观性特征。正是在历史的转折点上，主观性第一次出现在世界历史中，这就是我们在苏格拉底身上所看到的情形。[4]

苏格拉底对道德观念的发展所作出的贡献，在于他能够有意识地拒绝以往所有道德规范的权威性，同时又能意识到自己的自由。原有道德规范所谓的客观权威性被个人的道德主观性取代。这样，反讽导致的不是道德的虚无主义，而是道德的主观主义。通常来讲，反讽的含义有两种：首先按照克尔凯戈尔

[1] 克尔凯戈尔：《反讽的概念——关于苏格拉底的系列评论》（普林斯顿，1989年），211页。

[2] 同上书，268页。

[3] 同上书，212页。

[4] 同上书，281页。

的观点，反讽就是苏格拉底的假装无知。这是苏格拉底使用的一种策略，旨在对传统道德观念进行彻底的批判；其次，爱用反语挖苦的苏格拉底不再对传统道德顶礼膜拜。他之所以无视传统道德，那是因为他破除了这种道德的客观性。但是，他之所以轻视他自行接受的道德观念，那是因为他认为，这种接受就如同任意给自己规定的任务一样，有点像是一个人因为喜欢而养成的一种癖好[1]。为什么苏格拉底没有简单地将传统道德和主观道德一并放弃？克尔凯戈尔对这一问题也没有给出任何答案。根据他的观点，苏格拉底已经提出了“真善美的观念，以此作为实现可能的理想世界的界限”[2]，这里似乎暗示着存在一个更高的阶段，道德的主观主义将被超越。在这本书中[3]，克尔凯戈尔还就苏格拉底对他朋友产生的神奇作用和耶酥向他信徒传授圣灵进行了一番比较，这个比较指向了克尔凯戈尔在其后期著作中提出的作为更高发展阶段的信仰飞跃，当然这种信仰飞跃在本书中还仅仅有所暗示而已。

在《最后的非科学性的附言》(1846) 一书中，克尔凯戈尔将这个暗示进一步明晰化，苏格拉底作为基督教思想先驱的传统形象带有了明显的个人色彩。基督教的本质在书中被看作是主观性的。从思辨哲学的客观立场来看，基督教是一种荒谬的信念，因为信奉基督教仅仅依赖于那种个人无法判定的信仰飞跃，而且这种信仰飞跃是不能为抽象的概念体系所接受的，因为它是一种个人献身的生活方式而已。这种个人的献身超越了客观的知识，在克尔凯戈尔看来，这就通向了一种真理的独特形式：

---

[1] 同上书，235 页。
[2] 同上书，197 页。
[3] 同上书，29 页。

一种客观的不确定性就固着在充满了激情的精神变化过程中，这就是真理，这就是一个生存个体所能够达到的最高真理……上面这个真理的定义也就是信仰的定义。没有经历过冒险，就不会有信仰。信仰正好就是个体精神的无限激情与客观不确定性之间的矛盾。如果我能够客观地去理解上帝，我就不会去相信上帝的存在，正是因为我不能够客观地去理解上帝，所以我必须相信上帝的存在。如果我希望一直保持信仰，我就必须不断地抓住这种客观的不确定性，以致使自己深入到7万英寻的水底来保持自己的信仰。[1]

在对道德的个人坚守中，苏格拉底接近了这个真理，以致他差不多被看作是一个异教徒：

真理的本质就是主观性和精神性，这也就是苏格拉底的智慧，它的永久价值就是使我们认识到存在的基本意义，其实认识者就是一个生存个体。苏格拉底因为他的无知而显示了这个真理，就其最主要的意义来讲，这属于异教徒的信仰。[2]

克尔凯戈尔是想把苏格拉底不仅当作是道德的个人献身者，而且还把他看作是上帝的个人信仰者。这种信仰确实预示了后来的基督教的信仰，只是还缺乏深刻的悖论性：

当苏格拉底相信有上帝存在的时候，他全部的思想激情都指向客观的不确定性，信仰正是植根于这种矛盾和冒险之中的。现在不同的是，确定性取代了客观的不确定性。客观地讲，确定性也是荒谬的；这种荒谬由思想激情所坚守，便成为了信仰。与面对荒谬的那种严肃相比较，苏格拉底的无知就像是一种诙谐的嘲笑；与信仰的那种严肃紧张相比较，苏格拉底式的存在

[1] 克尔凯戈尔：《最后的非科学性的附言》（普林斯顿，1941年），182页。
[2] 同上书，183页。

主义精神就像是古希腊人轻浮的思想。[1]

苏格拉底将上帝存在的主观信仰与事物的客观真理结合起来之后还是摇摆不定。在某种程度上他还处于思想的困惑之中，这也就是基督教徒内心的精神痛苦，他要为之献身的那些客观真理也是没有什么理性可言的。

在尼采看来，他对苏格拉底的感情充满了难以解开的矛盾，就像他对耶稣和瓦格纳[2]的感情一样，正如他自己所说："苏格拉底与我是如此的亲近，使得我要永远与他搏斗"。尼采的这种矛盾感情是用不同的口气表达出来的，有时是在不同的作品中，有时又是在同一部作品的不同地方。在他发表的第一部作品《悲剧的诞生》(1872) 里面，尼采表达了他对苏格拉底的这种矛盾感情。这部作品的中心论点是希腊悲剧产生于古希腊两种对立的创造性力量的相互作用之中，尼采认为阿波罗神和狄奥尼索斯神[3]正是这两种力量的代表。荷马在他的作品中充分地描述了阿波罗神性格的倾向，按照荷马的描述，这种倾向与梦境难分难解，它展现的似乎就是一个想象的世界，就像是荷马的那个充满理智而又令人愉快的众神世界一样。狄奥尼索斯性格的倾向类似于酒醉的狂喜，它要表现的是那些强烈的和无法控制的冲动，尤其是性欲和暴力的冲动。这些冲动在传统宗教节日的场合可以得到表达。古希腊人的独创就是发展了戏剧节的形式，将阿波罗神的幻想与狄奥尼索斯的狂喜结合到一个独特的综合体中而创立了悲剧这种艺术形式。在阿提卡式的

---

[1] 克尔凯戈尔:《最后的非科学性的附言》, 188 页。

[2] 瓦格纳 (W.R.Wagner,1813—1883), 德国作曲家, "乐剧"的创始人, 毕生创作了大量的歌剧作品, 著名的有《尼伯龙根的指环》、《漂泊的荷兰人》、《纽伦堡名歌手》等。—— 译注

[3] 阿波罗 (Apollo), 古希腊罗马神话中所称的太阳神, 他是阳光、智慧、预言、音乐、诗歌、医药、男性美等的保护神; 狄奥尼索斯 (Dionysus), 希腊神话中的酒神。—— 译注

悲剧中，阿波罗神的部分与几个对话情节完全联系起来，狄奥尼索斯神的部分则与合唱结合在一起，但是我们不要以为这种综合是一种简单的并列。恰恰相反（虽然尼采作品的晦涩带来了解释上的风险），尼采认为悲剧的世界既是黑暗可怕的，就像狄奥尼索斯代表的力量一样，同时又是理智快乐的，带着一些神秘，就像阳光普照的荷马的神灵世界一样。“史诗 - 阿波罗神的力量是如此地令人惊奇，它在我们眼前用外观的快乐将最可怕的东西化为幻境，并通过幻境而得到解脱”。[1]

这种综合在埃斯库罗斯[2]和索福克勒斯的戏剧作品里达到了高潮，但在欧里庇得斯的作品里却消失了。欧里庇得斯的悲剧是一种退化的悲剧形式，其显著特征就是对人物的现实主义刻画，使它更接近新喜剧的世界而不是埃斯库罗斯和索福克勒斯那种可怕而又充满理想的世界。尼采针对欧里庇得斯的变化有一个评价，他认为是欧里庇得斯：

将观众带到了舞台上面……因为欧里庇得斯的缘故，凡夫俗子们从观众席上挤到了舞台上面；以前只是表现伟大勇敢品质的镜子，现在却显示出令人烦恼的真实，而且还故意展现自然的混乱样子[3]。

这样苏格拉底就登场了。尼采以他个人的方式重提当时的传说，强调苏格拉底与欧里庇得斯的密切联系[4]，认为苏格拉底对悲剧的衰退产生了决定性的影响。在他看来，正是欧里庇得斯使悲剧的衰退成为了现实。

---

[1] 根据尼采原书的英译本译出。见尼采:《悲剧的诞生》（纽约，1967），12 页。

[2] 埃斯库罗斯（Aeschylus, 约公元前 525— 前 456），古希腊三大悲剧作家之一，据说创作了 80 余个剧本，现存《被缚的普罗米修斯》和《阿伽门农》等。—— 译注

[3] 此处译文参考了周国平译的《悲剧的诞生》，三联书店，1986 年，45 页。

[4] 见第欧根尼 · 拉尔修 2.18。

当然，这种影响的确切方式在尼采的散文作品中是不容易被发现的。他认为欧里庇得斯仅仅是一个面具，借他之口说话的是一种通达神意的超凡力量，这个神力既不是狄奥尼索斯也不是阿波罗，而是苏格拉底[1]。尼采似乎在暗示，欧里庇得斯的现实主义是建立在心理自然主义基础之上的。他的戏剧人物在舞台上所遵循的行为心理原则，同我们用来解释日常生活中人们实际行为的心理原则是一样的。尼采将其称之为“**审美的苏格拉底主义**”，它的最高原则大体可以解释为“美的就是可理解的”，这正好与苏格拉底的格言“知识即德性”[2]互为补充。“苏格拉底主义”似乎就是一种自然主义式的理性精神的代名词，它试图采用解释和批评的方法来驯服那些在埃斯库罗斯和索福克勒斯悲剧中得到称颂的可怕力量。

苏格拉底主义谴责当时流行的艺术和道德。苏格拉底主义以其挑剔的眼光发现它们缺少真知和充斥着幻想；由于缺少真知也就意味着要出现那些十分荒唐和堕落的事情。正是基于这样的观点，苏格拉底相信他有责任去纠正人生：他独自一人，孤芳自赏，作为一种截然不同的文化、艺术和道德的先驱者，他走进了一个世界，其触及到的那些问题将会给我们带来最大的幸福[3]。

审美的苏格拉底主义似乎将理智主义扩展到了艺术领域，而柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底试图将其运用到日常行为上面。在柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底看来，德性就是知识，德性足以保证我们得到幸福；可以说正确的人生是依靠理智来实现的，而错误的人生是因为缺乏理智造成的。正如柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底否定

---

[1] 此处及以下译文均根据尼采著作的英译本译出。见尼采：《悲剧的诞生》(纽约，1967)，12页。

[2] 同上书，11页。

[3] 同上书，13页。

了人身上非理性因素的积极作用，神秘的力量和理性不能捕捉的东西在苏格拉底式的艺术那里也没有一席之地。但是，悲剧自身的力量和深邃正是来自于它与理论的对抗。悲剧所探究的力量超出了心理理解的范围，它所展现出来的人生困境是道德理论的力量也不可能解决的。因此，苏格拉底主义代表了一种精神的极度贫乏，尼采借用了“颓废”一词来称呼这种精神的贫乏（这里他用了法文词*décadence*）。

对“颓废”一词的使用反映了尼采对苏格拉底的矛盾态度。《悲剧的诞生》一书中弥漫着尼采的一种感受，他把苏格拉底看作是具有超人品质的独特个体，“是一个能够用知识和理性来摆脱死亡恐惧的人”[1]，也是一个体现了探索精神的超越性力量的人。“苏格拉底自省的快乐”可以改变一个人对于整个世界的态度：

柏拉图笔下的苏格拉底看来就是一个在传授一种全新的“希腊人的快乐”和确认幸福生活的导师，他力求在日常行为中对优秀青年实施他的思想助产术和教育的熏陶，指望从中培养出一个天才来[2]。

这样我们就不得不把苏格拉底看作是所谓世界历史的转折点和旋风中心了[3]。

苏格拉底成为了科学精神的化身，这种精神导致了近代科学的最高成就，而人类的生存离不开这些科学成就。但是与此同时，尼采认为这种苏格拉底式的乐观主义，这种以为知识的力量可以解决一切人类和自然问题的信念，不仅是一种根深蒂固的谬见，而且还是一种精神衰退的症状。在《悲剧的诞生》

[1] 同上书，15 页。
[2] 同上书，15 页。
[3] 同上书，15 页。

的后面部分，尼采的这个观点得到了激烈的表达：

对于这种本质已经退化的音乐[即新阿提卡颂歌，这是在公元前5世纪后期出现的一种音乐形式]，真正的音乐天才只有厌恶和拒绝，就像他们厌恶苏格拉底毁灭艺术的倾向一样。阿里斯托芬准确的直觉完全是有道理的，他对苏格拉底本人、欧里庇得斯的悲剧和新颂歌诗人的音乐抱着同样的拒斥态度，他在这所有的3种现象中看到了一种文化衰退的征兆[1]。

一个人只要被苏格拉底式的求知欲束缚住，他就会妄想用知识来治愈永恒的生存创伤[2]。

在这个部分的后面，尼采接着谈到现代世界被亚历山大派（即缺乏创造的和学究式的）的文化所困扰，这种文化把为科学效力的理论家当作它的代表人物，其原型就是苏格拉底，而苏格拉底式文化的成果就是那种“妄想拥有无限力量的乐观主义”。在《悲剧的诞生》发表14年后又出了第二版，尼采借此附加了“作为一个自我批评的尝试”的章节，这里他又回到了同样的主题：“正是由于道德上的苏格拉底主义，由于辩证法，由于理论家的简朴和快乐而导致了悲剧的消亡……这种苏格拉底主义难道不是没落、萎靡、腐化的标志吗？难道不是本能失调而走向衰微的标志吗？”[3]。

在他的后期作品中，尤其是在他最后精神崩溃之前的1888年所写的那些作品中，尼采的口气更加尖刻。他在这些作品中就把自己等同于狄奥尼索斯的力量，在他看来，苏格拉底拒绝狄奥尼索斯的力量，实际上就是对人性的一种拒绝，他对此有着十分激烈的反应。在《瞧！这个人》一书论及《悲剧的诞生》

[1] 同上书，17页。
[2] 同上书，18页。
[3] 同上书，1页。

的章节部分，尼采说到他的这本书有两个创新之处。首先是他认识到狄奥尼索斯现象是“整个希腊艺术的唯一基础”；其次是他“对于苏格拉底主义的认识：是他第一次发现苏格拉底要为希腊的衰落负责，并把苏格拉底看作是一个颓废者的典型”。他接着说，“我是第一个看到”：

一种真正的对立——一方是以隐蔽的复仇欲望来面对生命的那种堕落本能，另一方是产生于旺盛生命力而毫无保留的接受痛苦甚至罪恶的最高的生命肯定……这种最根本的、最快乐的、最自由的、最纵情的生命肯定，不仅是最高的洞见，而且也是最为深刻的洞见，这种洞见得到了真理和知识的最严格地证实和肯定……承认现实和肯定现实，对于强者来说是绝对需要的，就像弱者因懦弱变得胆小而需要逃避现实一样——逃避是弱者的“理想”……他们不会自由地去认识：颓废者需要的是谎言——这是他们的一个生存手段——对于一个不仅理解“狄奥尼索斯”的词义，而且还按照这个词义来理解自己的人来说，他根本不需要去反驳柏拉图、基督教、叔本华——因为他能够闻出他们所散发出来的腐败气味。[1]

尼采的《偶像的黄昏》写于1888年初，他在这本书论及苏格拉底的文章里使用了“疾病”和“腐败”这样的词语。尼采就苏格拉底的遗言首先进行攻击。按照他的解释，苏格拉底的遗言表达了对从生命的疾苦中得到解脱的感激之情。这个遗言所表达出来的厌世倾向，正是苏格拉底以及那些将道德和价值理论化的所谓圣人们患有的疾病。

不管怎么说他们肯定是患上了某种疾病——这就是我们的答复：一个人应该走近去观察他们，这是一些历史上最聪明的人！……是不是出现在地球上的智慧就如同一只渡鸦，需要闻

---

[1] 尼采：《瞧！这个人》（哈莫斯沃，1990），80页。

到腐肉的味道才会兴奋呢？[1]

苏格拉底和柏拉图是“衰退的征兆……是希腊走向崩溃的代表……是伪希腊人……是反希腊人的代表”，在他们的理论中包含着一种否定生命的态度。这种态度与狄奥尼索斯对生命的胜利似的肯定态度是对立的，而尼采恰恰把狄奥尼索斯与自己划上了等号。

尼采并没有止于把苏格拉底描绘成一个典型的（也许是原型的）颓废者；在其中令人惊讶的5个分节中（3-7），尼采还就苏格拉底的个人品质进行了猛烈的攻击。他的措词甚至带有反犹主义的那种令人讨厌的自命不凡的口气。在他看来，苏格拉底属于社会的最低阶层：他是一个下等人。他的丑陋就是一种无耻放荡的性格的标志。他甚至怀疑苏格拉底到底是不是一个希腊人。辩证法是一种恶毒的发明，它使得下等人能够打败比他们优秀的人，即打败那些趣味优雅和行为得体的人。辩证法是那些没有其他防卫力量的人手中最后的武器。（这就是为什么犹太人都是辩证论者的缘故。）苏格拉底装得一本正经的样子，但其实不过是个滑稽的小丑罢了。

在知道尼采写作此书时已经临近精神崩溃的情况下来读这些评论，我们可以把这些评论看作是病态的胡言乱语而不用去理会。然而，即使这些评论是如此的猛烈和病态，但还是表现了尼采内心深处对于苏格拉底的矛盾态度。在该书的第8节中，尼采说道，他前面所写的东西表明，苏格拉底有时十分令人厌恶，这样就更需要解释他为何还对苏格拉底如此着迷。在3-7节中，尼采对苏格拉底完全持敌对的态度，但我们不清楚尼采是不是真的这么讨厌苏格拉底。毫无疑问，在某种程度上，是的。在这几节中满是尼采对苏格拉底的冷嘲热讽，但不能

---

[1] 尼采：《偶像的黄昏》（哈莫斯沃，1990），39页。

因此就说他否定了苏格拉底。他对苏格拉底的美化抵消了那些丑化的评论，他把苏格拉底看作是这样一个人，尽管受到错误思想的引导，但却是心怀善意，态度认真。他想通过理性来控制危险的狄奥尼索斯冲动，以此使时代的疾弊得到纠正。尼采决不会收回他对苏格拉底的否定性评价。在他看来，苏格拉底“似乎是一个医生，也是一个拯救者”，但他不惜任何代价地信奉理性却是错误的和自欺的：“苏格拉底是一种曲解：**全部的道德改进，包括基督教徒，都是一种曲解**”。然而尼采说话口气的改变是明显的，他在最后部分谈到苏格拉底之死的的时候，带有一种十分忧伤的语气：

> 这个所有自欺者中间最为精明的人，他自己抓住了（只要生命是有活力的，幸福和本能就是不分的）真理了吗？他最后不是对自己说智慧就是面对死亡的勇气吗？……苏格拉底自己想去死——不是雅典人要他死，是他自己端着那个盛有毒酒的杯子，是他要求雅典人递给他这个杯子……他轻声地对自己说：“苏格拉底不是医生，只有死亡才是真正的医生……苏格拉底自己一直就是一个病人”[1]。

恰恰是因为他感到自己与苏格拉底如此亲近，所以一直到死，尼采都在批判苏格拉底。

[1] 同上书，44 页。

第六章

结 论

每个时代都要为自己重塑苏格拉底的形象。在我们今天这个后基督教和后唯心主义的时代，苏格拉底既不被当作是耶稣基督的一个先驱，也不被看作是世界精神发展到更高意识阶段的一个代表，那么苏格拉底对我们还有意义吗？答案是要历史地评价苏格拉底的重要性。因为正是他开创了系统化的伦理学思想，是他深刻地影响了柏拉图，是他成为了苏格拉底文献的核心人物。毫无疑问，即使对于我们这个世俗化和非意识形态化的时代来说，苏格拉底的历史重要性仍然是存在的。作为一个历史人物和文学人物，苏格拉底在许多方面都具有典型的意义，他是一个挑战者，一个鼓动者，一个启示者。最明显的例证就是苏格拉底用自己的哲学思考和系统化的质疑方法，也就是通过苏格拉底式的对话去挑战那些传统的哲学思想。尽管现在对古代经典作品的研究已经失去了它原有的文化优越性，许多人还是会发现苏格拉底的那些没有专业术语、生动有趣的对话可以鼓励学生自己与文本对话，可以作为最好的哲学入门读物。对于教师来说更有实际的作用。他们可以采用一些类似苏格拉底反诘法的方法刺激学生去审视自己的观念，根据说理来修正自己的观念，最后通过对已有知识的批判反思而得出自己的答案。当然，苏格拉底的反诘法不仅仅是作为教学方法来使

用，在现实生活中如同在苏格拉底的对话中一样，它也是一种自我批评的方法。苏格拉底的口号“未经审视的人生没有价值”[1]，表达了一种在一定程度上是由诚实所构成的人类核心价值观，这就是一个人乐意重新审视自己的想法，从而放弃自己身上固有的教条主义。走向极端的自我审视也可能会导致一个人的无所作为，但苏格拉底确实代表了一种生活的典范，不管怎样，始终坚持那些经受住了自我批评的理想，所以在某种程度上，他又是一个英雄。只要思想和道德的诚实还是人类的理想，苏格拉底就会是追求这一理想的最佳典范。

[1] 见柏拉图《申辩篇》，38a。